

Movin' On

A devotional reader for life changes

By

Rudy Bauer

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Forward

I started writing these devotions for my son as he ventured out of our home and into the world of higher education. It was my desire to give him an anchor to both home and the values that he was raised on. I now offer them to you. Some may be dated, as with the ones I wrote following the Columbine tragedy, but I have left them in for what insight they might offer. It is crucial, no matter what your destination in life is, that the very Word of God be your constant companion. I hope that these insights from my world will help you look at God's Word from a new perspective. May God go with you as you venture forth. Life is a journey, not just a destination.

Rudy Bauer
The Rocky Mountains
May, 2002

Promises

"Promises, the word of God is true, Promises, it's true for me and you." That's just part of a kid's song that I used to teach the 2nd & 3rd graders back when Jason was younger. But, it gets right to the point. There is just a whole lot of promises in God's word that are there for our comfort and encouragement. I'm going to start a listing and, with your help maybe we can get a fair number of them down by the end of this school year. Here's the format and an example of like the number one promise of God.

1. Salvation. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 So when you come across one of God's promises, send it to me and I'll add it to the list. It's kind of like a class project, only our class goes from sea to shining sea! Go in the knowledge that God's promises are true and they are meant for you! Rudy

Urgency

"Blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near." Rev 1:3b The time is near?? John said that over one thousand eight hundred and ninety years ago! Who's he trying to kid? In our society where if you're late just 5 or 10 minutes it can mean losing your job, how are we supposed to take words that tell us to live differently than the rest of the world because Jesus is coming soon. Here is the picture:"Look, he is coming with the clouds,and every eye will see him,even those who pierced him;and all the peoples of the earth willmourn because of him.So shall it be! Amen." Rev 1:7

Somehow, we as new testament Christians must learn to live with the sure knowledge that this event will happen soon. Our lives must reflect that urgency. But at the same time we must continue to work, learn, grow, love, sharing Christ with anyone who will listen. What a tension! I am not sure how we are to accomplish it. But I know we are supposed to try.Is there someone you know that doesn't know about Jesus? Why haven't you told them? Just waiting for the right time? What if tomorrow is to late? You've heard it said that you may be the only Bible that some people read. How about opening that Bible today!

Shine in the sure and certain knowledge that Jesus is coming soon!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Born Again

When I was still in High School, I remember walking into my Pastor's office and showing him that Scripture actually used the phrase "Born Again" (John 3). I was astonished and I was just sure he would be just as surprised. It may have been the first time that this man surprised me, but it certainly wasn't the last. You see, I didn't know it at the time, but this man would later become my Father-in-law and one of my greatest mentors and friends. Back to the story. He not only knew about the "born again" being in the Bible, he told me to pray for it. I did, and God has shown me over the years that He gives us many "born again" experiences. I have come to think of it as at least being "born again" every day. But the reason I was so concerned about it as a high schooler is that I had run into some other Christians that had said if I couldn't point to the exact time that I had been "born again," then I wasn't. This was not the last time my Father-in-law set me straight, but it was certainly an important time. It's amazing to me that we as Christians would actually try to turn someone else away from the faith because they didn't do things our way. The fact is, Jesus had known me from the time He knit me together in my mother's womb (Ps 139:13). He paid the price for me on the terrible cross of Calvary (Col 2:13-15). And He drew me to himself all while I was "powerless" (Rom 5:6). Is it just a little prideful to say that we have to do something to merit our salvation? Or worse yet, put that burden on someone else? Try to stay pure in what you share with others. Read God's word often to make sure your're on the right track. And glory in cross of Christ our Lord! Peace!Rudy.

Perfection

We have been made perfect in God's eyes through the grace and once-for-all-time sacrifice of the Holy Son of God. This is an awesome fact. But, we can't let that become a license for an unacceptable lifestyle. In the high school youth group we've been studying harmful things. Last night was music. I did not enjoy even the clips that were played in class, but what hurt my heart the most was many of the kids' reaction. Several saw nothing wrong with the evil, murderous words of the songs and some even tried to justify listening to it. There is no doubt in my mind that the whole world, myself included, has succumbed to the desensitization of Satan's scheme.

Let me try to use a little guilt motivation (my son hates it when I do this, but, you know-father's prerogative). In Heb 10:14 we're told, "because by one sacrifice he (Christ) *has made* perfect forever those who are *being made* holy." I added the bold to make the point. Christ has already made us perfect. He has already given us the ticket to get into heaven. He has already paved the road, created the route, prepared a place for us in heaven. He didn't wait for us to be perfect ourselves before he gave us the ticket home. Because of all that He has done for us shouldn't our response be an attempt to live a holy life. At least try. It scares me so much when Christian Youth from my own church are the ones standing up for the devil's strategies. But of course when I point at them it just reminds me of all the compromises I made in my own life. Time for a little self examination, to make sure the cancer of sin hasn't invaded our own lives and continues growing unchecked. I'll close with a quote from Thomas Paine from around 1791, "Moderation in temper is always a virtue; but moderation in principle is always a vice."

Live in God's gift of perfection today!Rudy

Forgiveness

Last week I asked for your most favorite promise from God. One way I judge if anyone is reading these morning devos is the kind of response I get to those kinds of requests. For those that did respond, Thank You. Now for the rest of you, don't you even have one favorite promise? Here's another one to remind you of the format. Forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. Now that's a promise! Patra Sue, our favorite DCE type person is going all out for the first Sunday of the Concordia Seward Spring Break with a special speaker and everything. More details when I get them. I'm on the road again tonight and tomorrow, so no devo tomorrow, but I plan to be in class on Sunday, hope to see many of you there. Live this day in the sure and certain knowledge that your sins are forgiven! Rudy

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And your drawings:

The Promise of Spring

The front range of the Rocky Mountains is a fantastic place to live. I am particularly looking forward to spring. Days like yesterday, with the car windows down, young kids that have jeeps drop the tops, old guys wash their cars in the driveways; make me realize that spring is coming. But, for anyone that has lived in Colorado more than a year, they know that the month of March is also when we get our heaviest snows. Back when I was a young kid I didn't have a jeep, I had a LANDCRUISER. And when I would drop the top I would always be hesitant in putting it back up. I remember shoveling feet of snow out of that car. I also remember getting dumped by a girlfriend all because we had to wear our down coats because I wouldn't put the top back up.

This may be a stretch, but here's the connection. I think it is awesome when I get a glimpse of the true body of Christ. It is like a little peek into heaven. There will be a time when there will be no pride, no backbiting, no filth surrounding us. But before we get to heaven, the body of Christ is the closest thing we have to it. "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought." 1 Cor 1:10 When that happens it is like a little springtime in the winter of this world. It is so awesome when we come together in the Spirit of God as a family. Rejoice that you are part of the body of Christ!

May you feel that breath of springtime that God has in store for us all. Rudy

Feeling Exposed?

Have you ever had one of those terrible dreams where you're in your underwear and you're trying to run away and can't get anywhere? Well, I have. I'm sure someone could psycho analyze me, but I think it's pretty simple. I don't like being unprepared or exposed to the world as unprepared. Another one from college days was this dream where I'm wandering the halls, not having a clue where my next class is. The sad part about this is, as many of you know, I still find myself unprepared much of the time. (At least I have my clothes on!)

God wants us to be prepared, and He has given us the instruction manual. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Tim 3:16 I know most of you that I write to each day are in a learning mode. I want to stress that Scripture alone is the test that all your learning should pass through. And it should be you reading Scripture, not someone else's interpretation of Scripture. That "God-breathed" reference is the same breath that God breathed into Adam to give him his spirit of life and the same Spirit that God poured out on all believers in the latter days (that's now, by the way). Use that Spirit to test everything; keep what's good and throw the rest away!
May the Spirit of the Living God illuminate your day. Rudy

Cut to the Chase

Most of you probably don't know that I have Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). In my studying of this "disorder", I have come to the conclusion that it is not a disorder, it is simply the way God made some of us. One author has even renamed it the Hunter Personality because we are better suited for hunting than farming. He points out, however, that we hunter types have to survive in a farming (detail oriented) world. Anyway, I am always on the lookout for other similar type personalities. One way to get a hint, is if someone is more interested in the bottom line than all the detail it took to get there.

In reading the Gospel of Mark I have come to the conclusion that he was probably an ADD type person. He gets right to the point. And when he records the words of Jesus he makes one of his better points: "'The most important one,' answered Jesus, 'is this: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'" Mark 12:29 Now a guy like me can get into direction like this. Simple and to the point. Let's see how simple it is to do it. Today, let's try to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Let me know how you come out. (But keep it short.)

Serve God today with your love!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Forfeit?

There's a line in a song that goes "Oh, what grace we often forfeit, Oh what needless pain we bear." I know that there are some of us that at times are martyrs and just think that Jesus wants us to suffer. But in our heart we know that's not true. Here's the verse. "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7 What a simple yet profound verse.

Several of you have actually worked for me when it was time to pick up bales of hay out of the field. We would always put the youngest driving the truck and the rest of us would pick up bales and toss them on the trailer. Picture if you will someone that just picked up the bale but refused to put it on the trailer. They just continued walking along beside the trailer carrying that one bale. Not only can they not help picking up other bales, but they can't even keep up after just a short while. What good would that person be to me? So if we can put our cares on God it frees us up to move faster and help other people who need it. It's really kind of stupid and selfish not to take God up on His offer to carry our load. Just think how much more work for the kingdom you can do if you're not dragging your "bale" along with you.

Serve the Lord and let Him carry the load! Rudy

Squelch the Spirit

At Pentecost Peter explained that the apostles were not drunk, but instead the fulfillment of prophecy was happening right before their eyes. He quotes Joel, "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people." Acts 2:17 I think as Lutherans sometimes that we are afraid of the Holy Spirit. I think that we may feel that if we talk about the Spirit too much that we might be labeled something that we don't like. Or there might be too many feelings attached with the Spirit. Because of this, sometimes we may squelch the Spirit. We are told in 1 Thess 5:19, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire;". We are told to live by the Spirit. If we put out the Spirit's fire how are we going to have a God pleasing life? I think that is why all the analogies to darkness and light in the Bible make so much sense. Without the Spirit to guide our spirit we are in total darkness. If we love the things of this world that are done in the darkness then we don't want the illuminating light of the Holy Spirit to wreck our good times. But see, in that situation the darkness has blinded us also, making us think that the darkness is the good life. Living without slavery to sin is the real and good life. One that is led by the Spirit. A life that is free from the bondage to all the things that control us. A life that is free to submit to the control of God. That is the good life. Because He loves us. And that perfect love is the control in our lives that will make the difference.

May you be controlled by the Spirit of the Living God. Rudy

Follow Through

The words of Jesus are recorded in Luke 9:62 as follows: "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." I must admit as a child I always had trouble with this verse and the ones surrounding it. Today I'm going to talk about one aspect that I have gained from this verse, but I don't think it's the only thing that the verse has to offer. But today this verse has help me with following through on a course of action that I believe that the Spirit has led me to. When following the Holy Spirit's guidance we all pray and ask God what it is He wants in the situation, then of course we try to push down our own thoughts and listen real hard for an answer.

My first experience with this was when I was younger and I had asked my Father-in-law how he knew what the Spirit's guidance was for him in regards to a specific call for him to serve in the ministry. You see it was my thinking that God surely got involved in the big picture of where ministers went, after all it was called a "divine call". It has only been through my growth in my life, through hardship and experience that I have come to realize that God wants to be part of every little aspect of my life. Who else knows the number of hairs on my head. I can't even count them; I sure some of them will fall out before I get done with the tally.

So, anyway I've come to try to commit all decisions to God. Now I have a long way to go to even begin to perfect listening to the Spirit's guidance. But as my Momma says, "God's not finished with him, yet." I'm on a most fantastic journey. God is not my copilot he is my Pilot! So this verse has helped me understand that even though the Spirit's leading may be quite strong at the outset of a project, and you're just positive that you know where God is leading you, during the midst of the battle or journey or whatever, you may start to wonder if you really heard God right. This verse tells me not to doubt, not to look over my shoulder to see if some other path might have been better, but to trust God with the outcome. That's another point. The outcome that we have in mind may not even be close to the outcome that God has us headed for. But we still must trust in His compass bearing and press on in the midst of the darkest times. God is trustworthy! I would much rather turn the pilot's seat over to Him than to try to steer my life myself. Sorry for waxing poetic, but sometimes I allow my self a little more space on Saturdays.

Be of good cheer, God loves you, let Him guide your life!Rudy

Hope

For some reason I've been getting the message of "trust me" from God lately. It is really interesting how that whole concept of hope is tied up with trust. Here's a powerful verse: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Rom 15:13 So why would we want to "overflow with hope"? Could it be that hope and trust are linked in a fundamental way? Maybe the more we trust the stronger our hope is, which helps us to trust more. Just think of the fantastic things we could do for the kingdom if we 'overflowed with trust' in Christ Jesus!

Can we warp drive our walk with Christ? I think that **we** can't do squat. But I think there are times that the Holy Spirit can move us along rather quickly. Many years ago I remember a particularly tough time financially, and I remember praying for divine insight while taking my daily walk by the creek. Then I remember praying, less than a week later, "OK, God I get the point! Don't choke me." I felt like God had given me all I could handle in the way of insight. But if we 'overflow with hope' and trust 'by the power of the Holy Spirit', I think that we can grow much quicker in the eternal truths that God wants us to learn. Remember, head knowledge may help you pass a test, but until it becomes heart knowledge it won't help you live. That heart knowledge is where hope and trust are the best classroom.

Trust in the love of Jesus Christ and grow in the sure and certain hope of His love. Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Hope some more

I talked about hope yesterday, but it looks like I'm going to talk about it again today. I understand that this is a particularly tough week for the freshman class at the Air Force Academy. So if I may make a toast, "This verse is for you, bud!" Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 41:30-31

There are many things that the world says will keep you going; make you strong or attractive; give you business success; or maybe just money, but the truth is here right in the Word of God given to us by the "Creator of the ends of the earth" (Is 40:28). The Lord our God, maker of heaven and earth, will Himself be our strength! If God is for us who can be against us? The world doesn't stand a chance! Let us hope in the Lord! Let us give Him every situation, every fear, every trouble; and He will give us strength. Strength for the journey and strength to make it home.

May you Hope in the Strength of the Living God. Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
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Glory

When I was young, I remember there was not much extra money. Since I was the youngest of six I lived with hand-me-downs, but really didn't know the difference. Except my bike. Everyone could see that my bike was a little big for me. My Dad had masterfully remade this bike from several pieces of left over bikes. But since it was so big and I was still growing into it, I had to start by standing on a curb, with the bike lower to get going. Most of the time this worked. One time it didn't. I only got going a little and came crashing back into the curb, with my mouth wide open. That's when I chipped my front tooth and the whole neighborhood came to my rescue. Of course, there is not much greater embarrassment for a young manly man than to be rescued by the parents of the girl that he secretly adored. What's this got to do with Glory? We're told that Jesus knew every situation because He was a man. He can "sympathize" (Heb 4:15) with us. He endured this earth for the Glory that awaited Him. And because He was triumphant, we can now "approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Heb 4:16) The only thing different in my life from that little boy is I don't yell quite as loud when I fall down. And I know that in my time of need my help comes from the One who did it perfectly. The author and perfecter of my faith, Jesus Christ. There is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved. May you experience the assurance of the Glory that has been won for you! Rudy

Joke on Me

When kids are learning to command the English language, they sometimes comes up with insightful sayings. Noah, my 4 year old, is at that stage. And one thing that he does not like is when his older brother, Aaron (14), "jokes on him." Obviously, Noah means that he doesn't like Aaron teasing him. But Noah just turns around and says, "Don't joke on me!" It kind of gets his point across in just a few words. None of us really like to be the brunt of a hurtful joke or tease. I have noticed that people at times can be extremely insensitive. How sad. Know that the Lord is always there and always loves you.

After Noah is done being mad, he comes to me and says, "Daddy, I love you." Of course he wants me to pick him up and tell him that I love him. How long has it been since you told God that you love Him and then crawled up in His lap for a good cuddle? We need it. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matt 11:28. The words of Jesus call us to rest in His lap. There are times we all need it. And there are times we should take him up on His offer, even when we think we don't need it. I am going away for a Spiritual Retreat this weekend, starting tonight, of which I know nothing about except some very trusted friends tell me I should go. So, no more devos until next Monday and of that I'm sorry, but they won't even let me bring my watch, let alone my laptop. But I can keep praying! Go with God! Be at peace and rest in His lap! Rudy

I've missed you

Dear Family, I've missed you. Most of you know that I've been on a "Spiritual Renewal" retreat long weekend. As many times happen, a mountain top experience tends to warp time. In this case it seems like weeks since I wrote my last devotion. I missed my children and wife very much. But I want you to know that I also missed you. Some on this list are very good and close friends and others I've only met through our brief e mail conversations, but we all share the bond of the grace of Jesus Christ. And I've missed our fellowship. Do you think God misses us when we pull away for a time, or drop our pray life because we don't have the time? Or when we forget that caring for our neighbors needs is really caring for Christ's needs?

Out of this weekend I will cherish many thoughts. One verse that I marked that I planned to share with you is John 15:16; "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last." God has chosen you!! This is not a mistake, this is not a misprint. He has chosen you; for crying out loud, HE MADE YOU! I know He misses us when we pull away from Him. I know we grieve Him when we've been "absent" from Him and in the world instead. I'm glad to back in communication with all of you. I would dearly love to hear from you. I know God would love to renew, or increase or start over His communion with you and I know He'd love to hear from you, too. May you rest assured in the fact that the God of the Universe has chosen you by name. Rudy.

Hot Stuff

I've always wondered why those primitive tribes in those far off countries made their young men walk over hot coals. Thinking through it, I suppose their feet had to be fairly tough if they were going to begin a life of hunting to feed their family and tribe. So if their feet weren't tough before the coal walk they certainly would develop some blisters that would result in tough feet.

John the Baptist was sent to the people as a refiner's fire to burn away all the impurities so the people would be ready for Jesus. The prophet Malachi said of John, "But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire." (Mal 3:2) I believe that God still sends out the refiner's fire. Our version of the fire walk. I think that many times when life hits us the hardest, God is just preparing us to receive His Son, either for the first time or for a renewal of our relationship. The first thing that it does is gets us to focus on what's important and minimize what is just background noise in our life. We then are ready for a life changing relationship with our Savior. The Holy Spirit has good ground in which to work. After we have passed through the refiner's fire, like those young fire walkers, we are tougher and ready to serve the God who has given us life.

Be responsive to the Holy Spirit's leading in your life. Always be ready to plant the seed in a life freshly refined. And always be responsive to the refiner's fire in your own life. Be ready for a chance to get tough!

May the Lord bless you today. Rudy

Guidance from above

For those of you that have been with me from the beginning of these devos, you know that there have been several "waves" of thoughts. Well, I'm back on free will again. This is such a hard concept to grasp and I am afraid that I, as well as most of the Christian world have twisted it into our own image. So anyway, I am digging and you will hear more on the subject in the upcoming days. Feel free to give me your favorite works or passages concerning this subject. But what I writing about today is how one should approach a study of God's Word. It is important not to let one's own sinful self do the interpretation. In 1 Thess 5:23, right after Paul tells us to not put out the Spirit's power and to test everything, he gives this blessing, "May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." We have a spirit, or breath of God. This is what God breathed into Adam. This is what separates us from the animals. This is where we need to listen to God's Holy Spirit to give us the guidance when we read His Word.

As I have begun my "will" search, I have started to re-read Luther's 'Bondage of the Will' and I find it interesting that in the intro he says this: "There may be, I grant, some who have not sensed the Spirit who informs my writings". Now of course we may say sure, Luther, he was a great man of God. But it is important to understand that God, in these latter days has poured out His Spirit on **all** believers. So we have two choices; we either listen to the Spirit or we squelch the Spirit. Please pray that both I and you will listen to the Spirit today.

Blessings and Peace.Rudy

More Noah Insight

Noah taught me some more yesterday. For those who are new to these morning talks, Noah is my 4 year old, who at times can be slightly strong-willed. Yesterday, after writing to you about my search on man's free will I went up to change Naomi's diapers. I asked Noah to get off the bed because many times he'll bug her during the changing. In one of his little temper tantrums he stood there next to the bed and yelled, "You're not in charge of me, I'm in charge of myself!" It was like a picture of me yelling the same thing at God. As if I were saying, "God, I want control of my Life, you're not in charge of me!"

God made us. Then we sold ourselves into the slavery of sin. Then God bought us back with the precious blood of His own dear Son. Then He drew us to Jesus, who is the author and perfecter of our faith. Paul says in Eph 2:10, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Do you think God is sad when we stand there and yell, "You're not the boss of me!"? Maybe He does what I did when Noah yelled at me. I just laughed. Because from my perspective it was funny. Then I just kept on loving Noah in hopes that as he grows he will gain self control and willingly submit to my control. Let's pray today that each one of us will willingly submit to the Father's control. After all, we don't want God laughing at us, now do we?

Praise the God who bought us back and brought us back to Himself. Rudy

Undeserved Grace

Oh most Holy and Awesome God, help me to know what it meant for you to take on the sins of the whole world including my sin and carry them to the cross just so that I might have a chance at life in heaven with you. You are the most precious, Holy One sent from above to be the payment for my most grievous fault. Help me to understand the true meaning of undeserved grace and live a life that shows that I understand it's meaning. In your most Holy Name I pray, Amen.

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom 5:8 How can we truly grasp this concept of undeserved grace? It is so foreign to us. As we go through life we have to merit everything we get. Grades, promotions, money, even love. How can we understand that there was nothing lovable about us, but yet God sent His only Son to be the ransom for me! I think all understanding of our Christian walk must begin at the cross with this concept of undeserved grace. Without it, it's me, me, me. With it, it is the name of Jesus. And only Jesus! How can we even talk about our life when it was worth even less than that of a sacrificial animal before it was redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ? Because without payment for our sins we simply would have had to pay the price ourselves, which would have left us burnt up with a balance still owed.

Praise be the name of Jesus, our Lord and our Savior! Rudy

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And your drawings:

The Ember of Life

Picture yourself, if you will, as an ember. I'm going to use this analogy for my discussion of free will. I'm sure everyone will let me know what you think. In the beginning God breathed life into Adam. He was given an ember which became a live glowing flame, we'll call it his spirit. This is where God and Adam communicated, Spirit to spirit. And it was good. When Adam and Eve sinned, the ember was doused with cold water. The fire went out. God knew that the fire went out because He had to go looking for Adam. Their communion link had been severed. When we are born the ember is there, but it is cold and dark. It can only do dark things. Everything it touches has a layer of soot from its contact. We are dead in our sins and can do no good thing. Through our baptism, the most Awesome Creator that once breath life into Adam, now breaths life into us and our ember is rekindled. We have been reborn! Our communion with God has been reestablished and our spirit can now listen to His Spirit. Yet this not of our own will because our embers were dark and only desired the dark things of this world. Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him," John 6:44.

But now our ember is glowing with the new life that God has given us. Jesus says to the church at Laodicea and through them to all believers, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Rev 3:20. We now can participate with Jesus in our new life for we have become alive to the things of the light. Sadly, we can also choose to not answer the door. We can now choose to indulge all the things that we used to do in the darkness. How much better is it to choose to open the door and let Jesus in!! Jesus knows our spirit for it has been rekindled within us by Him, because He bought and paid for the right to claim us for His own. As for me, I want the door to stand open all the time! Jesus live with me and make my spirit burn bright with the power of your Love, Amen.

Blessings to all of you. Rudy

God's Baseball Bat

My priorities were called into question yesterday and it made me think back to one of my baseball bat experiences. This is not to be confused with a light bulb experience, which is what I call those times when God has given me understanding of His Word. Rather, a baseball bat experience is one of those times that I just have been ignoring God for a period of time on a particular subject and He finally decides that it's time to bring home a point. When my number 2 boy, Zachary was just a year and a half old, I was playing the corporate game. I was doing quite well, climbing up the corporate ladder, traveling about half the time to far off cities to very important meetings. I even earned enough frequent renter points from Hertz that I got both my boys some lavish stuff toy as a reward. Coming home from one trip I walked in the door to the welcome deserved for my sacrifices. I got a big hug from my wife and I reached out to pick up Zachary but he was scared of me and clung to Mom. And my wife says, "He doesn't know you." Connect one baseball bat to the side of my head. I changed my priorities that day. And as the poet says, "And that has made all the difference."

"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, ... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Joshua 24:15 That day I realized that my number one calling from the Lord was to be a Daddy. And to pass the torch of His love to the next generation. God has blessed me with 7 wonderful children, and I don't take my calling lightly. So when someone wonders why I won't schedule a meeting over dinner; well I guess I'll just have to tell them why. May God bless you with a baseball bat when you need one. Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

What about Jonah?

Last Saturday, in the 'ember of life' discussion, I basically said that once we are born again through Jesus Christ that we have free will; that we can answer the door when Jesus knocks or, sadly, not answer it. I've been asked, "What about Jonah?" You know the dude in Old Testament that got to ride in the belly of a big fish for three days and three nights. Well, I don't really have a good answer. Jonah starts his narrative with the words, "The word of the Lord came to Jonah," Jonah 1:1 and then again after the big fish part, "Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time," 3:1. The first thing I'd say is this; If you can say that the word of the Lord has come to you, then you better do what He is telling you to do. God doesn't change. But I think that the new testament covenant is a softer and gentler covenant than the old one. Under the new covenant we each have been given the Comforter (Holy Spirit) to guide us in our walk. We also have His Word in the most accurate and easily understood translation since AD 100. We have Jesus' example when He said, "Yet not as I will, but as you will." Mat 26:39 Jesus also tells us in John 7:17, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." The definition of the Greek word used for choose in this passage goes like this, 'To will, wish, desire, implying active volition and purpose.' And lastly, we see that as we mature we can stand firm in God's will, "that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured." Col 4:12. So what's that all mean? Praise God for GRACE. Without it I'd be in the belly of a whale. With it I can keep on working for maturity in Christ our Lord! Anyone for a swim? Rudy.

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

The Flame

Now that we have this ember glowing within us, whether we gained it through adult conversion or "from infancy" as Timothy (2 Tim 3:15), we need to tend the ember. Paul tells Timothy "to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." (2 Tim 1:6,7) Paul continues in verse 8, "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord." It's a common theme of Paul's. My theme verse from my Retreat weekend became Rom 1:16: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."

It's my sad confession that sometimes I'm even ashamed of my faith among Christians. And when I get among unbelievers; well, let's just say I'm ashamed of my ashamedness. If we take that gift of God, that glowing ember of our reborn spirit, and fan the flame by adding the fuel of God's Word and letting the wind of God's Holy Spirit blow through it, it will grow into a roaring fire! We won't be able to hide it, it will be like a watch fire on a hill. That is why we study, to add fuel to our ember. And we pray to add the Holy Spirit's wind and discernment, to fan our flame into brightness.

May your ember grow with the brightness of God's good grace and favor. Rudy

To the Plain!

Now I ask you, why would anyone who lives in the beautiful Rockies Mountains, go for a vacation to the plains of Kansas? The answer in a moment. The situation reminds me of the 3 disciples who went up on the mountaintop with Jesus when He was transfigured. I would have been with Peter. How about building a little vacation retreat up there on the mountain and let the world come up? BBQs every night. A little campfire singing. Wow, what a ministry. But Jesus had a different ministry in mind. Jesus says, "In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." Mat 17:12 I would have been with Peter for sure. I would have wanted to retreat back up the mountain where it was glorious and beautiful.

But Jesus had a ministry that had people in mind. People that were hurting; that wouldn't be able to climb the mountain. People like you and me that hadn't even been born. How could He help us without coming down off the mountain? He knew He had to die for my sins, that's why He came down off the mountain. I think we're called down off the mountain for a similar reason. Not to die, but to live! To live for the people who are still dying in their sins without the knowledge of Jesus. And many times to reach those people we have to leave our mountaintops, ivory towers, spiritual retreats, to get to those people. They won't come to us there.

Yes, we're going to Manhattan, Kansas for people. Relationships that have been built strong in the Lord and relationships that don't yet know the Lord. (Anyone who wants to join us is more than welcome! Manhattan Holidome through Saturday night. Come on over!) Sorry I won't be writing you until next Monday. May your Palm Sunday Celebration be joyful. Remember he rides into town for you and me and all people!

BlessingsRudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

In Touch

As high tech as this world has become, it's still doesn't compare to God's system. I really wanted to email you all while I was in Manhattan. So I checked at the front desk, and they said I'd have to go on campus just to get on the Internet. So then I tried just to talk with Jason and found out that my cell phone was only on manual roam, which meant that I had to use a credit card to call out and NOBODY could call me. Calls were just automatically sent to my home phone, of course that is the one place that I wasn't at. So anyway, I just had to make do with just praying for you. But, I did do that! So I started thinking about the communication system that God set up for us. You know I have never once got a busy signal, or an operator asking for my credit card. I've never been told that I was "out of range" for prayer. God has set it up so we can call Him anytime, anyplace, anywhere. In fact He says: "pray continually". 1 Thess 5:16. So since it's so available, and as a matter of fact, free, do we use it enough? I know I haven't reached "continually" yet. Maybe it's time you placed a call to the Father. I'm sure He has missed you, no matter how long it's been. May the blessing of a continually open line to your Father be with you today. Rudy

We All got it

We all got it; the question is how do we get rid of it! God opposes it, Love has none of it, it will come to an end, it will also fail us, the Lord even tears down the house of the man who has it, and of course it goeth before the fall. You guessed it; Pride. I put the letters SDG in about everything I own to try and remind me that we should *Soli Deo Gloria*, which means to God alone be the Glory! But it is hard. I really think pride was Satan's big stumbling block. Isaiah says that Satan desired the praise that was supposed to go to God. Isn't that what we do each and every day?? We sing nice in the choir; we're proud. We make a good point in class; we're proud. We write a good devotion; we're proud. You get the point.

It's so hard and sometimes trite to say to God be the Glory. But, I think it is a time that we can truly witness to the goodness of God. We need to tell people that we really believe that in Him we live and move and have our being. That He has given us our eyes, ears, reason and all our senses. We are alive today because of His good and gracious will! There is even a promise for us; "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 1 Pet 5:5 (Also is James and Proverbs.) You know when it's really hard to be humble? When some poor sap has it all wrong and we know the right answer. But, to talk in a humble way many times means not to talk at all.

May God give you a humble heart today. Rudy

A Full Cup

"My cup overflows, Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life." Ps 23:5,6 Who doesn't want a full cup? Don't you just hate it when you buy a pop at Macs and it's only half full? Or worse yet, they give you a cup that leaks and you don't notice it until it's all over you. Well, the topic I'm going to talk about today may not be easy for some of you to swallow, but study and experience have led me to believe that we can drain the cup that God fills for us.

Think of it this way, we are the cup and God daily fills us with blessings and goodness. But way down in the bottom of our cup we are drilling holes. These holes are sin. Now, let me say I'm not talking about salvation and legalism. We are saved by faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. No amount of works can get us into heaven. I'm talking about the blessings that God wants to give us on Earth. When we sin, it's like drilling these little (sometimes, not so little) holes in the bottom of our cup. We drain out all the goodness that God has in store for us. Sometimes we're so busy draining, we don't even see all the goodness passing us by.

So, unless you are a carpenter, STOP DRILLING HOLES! Patch the ones you have drilled by confession and then watch the cup fill up. Then the next time you want to drill a hole, just look around you and see which blessing of God that you want to do without. Maybe that will motivate you to put your drill away.

May God fill your cup today! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Mandate!

We call this Maundy Thursday because Jesus gave a new command or mandate on the night of the Last Supper. "A new command I give you; Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13:34 Now just for a moment let us together put ourselves in the sandals of Peter. This is a man that I can empathize with. For one thing he seems to speak before his mind catches up with his mouth.

Jesus had demonstrated this concept of loving one another by washing the feet of the disciples. But, of course, Peter had first given Him flack about it. Think about it. Peter had been the first to say, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Mat 16:16 This very same Guy (The Son of the Living God) is on the floor in front of you saying that if He doesn't wash your feet that you have no part in Him. What would you do? It is so hard to submit to this kind of free gift. It is a living example of Grace. But if we don't submit, just like Peter, we will have no part with Jesus. What a powerful word picture of the importance of allowing Jesus His will in our lives!

What a wonderful and gracious God that would give His very life for us, simply so that we might be able to join Him in His Presence for all eternity. It wasn't for Himself that He died, it was for us. Praise be to the Son of the Living God!

Could you let Him wash your feet today? Then go and do likewise. Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

I've been set free!

"Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.'" John 8:34-36 There was one particular Good Friday, years ago that I felt really distant from God. I remember feeling that Jesus must have felt REALLY distant from His Father on the cross with the weight of the sin of the whole world. But, I reasoned intellectually that since Jesus had paid the price I shouldn't be feeling this way. In our church at that time it was a custom to hand out a nail to each person as they left church on Palm Sunday. We were supposed to carry this nail all week as a reminder of our sin, then nail it to the cross in the Good Friday worship service. I had kept that nail in my pocket the whole week. Every time I went to get my car keys or some change it poked me. I was very aware of my sin with this constant reminder poking me every time I stuck my hand in my pocket. As I took my nail and my depression to the Good Friday service, I was also praying for God to let me know why I was feeling the way I was. He gave me the answer. It was guilt. That night, as I nailed my sins to the cross in the front of our church, really for the first time in my life, **I left them there**. I left all the pain and the guilt associated with my sin on Jesus. I knew He was the only person in the world capable of carrying the weight.

And as I walked away for those sins I realized I had been set free! Free from guilt, from sin, from the pain. Why in the world do we think we need to hang onto all that pain, when Jesus is there with open arms accepting all the pain of the whole world? Today, leave your guilt with Jesus. Live the life that He wants for you.

Serve Him for you have been set free! Rudy

Harping

You may be getting tired of the theme that seems to be running through my morning talks lately, or you may not have even caught it or it may be all in my head. But, I decided that a little harping on the same subject may not be all bad, after all we do need practice for heaven. (Get it, harp-ing) Well anyway, that's why I don't tell to many jokes. But here's the verse for today, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5 I still believe what we do with the Lord is the only "good" thing that we can do. The verse says that apart from Him we "can do nothing".

So what's in your heart? Is it Jesus? Or is it lust, maybe motivate by a questionable movie that you recently watched? Or is it greed, maybe motivated by the new car you'd like to buy? Or is it anger, maybe motivated by the things that you haven't forgiven? Or is it jealousy, maybe motivated by your desire to have someone else's glory? (maybe even God's?) "More than anything else, guard your heart, because the source of your life flows from it." Pro 4:23. The source of our life is Jesus. But, if we put all those other things in our hearts, will there be room for Him? We must do a little heart cleaning. And then heed Proverbs and "guard" your heart. Don't even let those things in the door!

May you love the Lord with all your HEART, mind, soul and strength. Rudy

Victory Lap

As most of you know our College age class on Sunday mornings is kind of an open discussion of anything anybody wants to talk about. I always have something prepared, but rarely get to use it. Last Sunday one of the questions was about the "He descended into hell" statement in the creed. I've done a little research and thought I would share it with everyone.

The statement is based on two kind of vague scripture references. The clearest is 1 Peter 3:18-20. "He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built." The second reference is Col 2:15, "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." After Luther's death, this whole issue came up, primarily whether Jesus went to suffer more for our sins or whether He went in victory. Since Jesus said "It is finished" on the cross we can be sure that He didn't check into hell as a guest. He rather went to proclaim victory over Satan and his followers as the Colossians verse says. For us as believers, He destroyed the power of hell, and took from the devil all his might. He reclaimed the keys to the kingdom that Adam has so easily given away to Satan. For other details on this event we will have wait until "we will fully know, just as we are fully known." Until then we rejoice in the fact that Jesus was able to take a victory lap around hell after He had conquered death, hell and Satan for all time for all believers. Praise be the name of Jesus!! May the route to heaven, won for you by your personal Savior, look really sweet to you today. Rudy

A walk with the Father. One of my most precious times of the day comes when I get to walk my 8 year old daughter, Hannah, to school in the morning. It's our time together. She gets her Daddy without any interruptions, and I get to hear all about the really important things in her life. Hannah is still young enough that she likes to hold my hand as we walk. That, and the fact that yesterday she tripped over a stump and almost fell, is the motivation for this devo. It occurred to me that if Hannah had not already had a hold of my hand, that I would not have had enough time to catch her before she fell all the way to the ground. But, since I was already holding her hand, all I had to do was pull up and she was saved from a painful encounter with frozen dirt.

Now, I don't want to compare my reaction time with God's, because I am positive that He knows when we are going to fall even before we trip. But, if we are already walking with our hand in the Father's hand, through prayer, study, worship; things like that, don't you think that when we do trip up in life that the fall will not be as hard or as far? Listen to the Psalmist, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me." Ps 138:7 You may not think that in today's world that you "walk in the midst of trouble", but I assure you that you do. Swords and arrows have been replaced by pornography and drugs. And let me assure that the enemy is aiming for you. But rest assured in the firm grip of the Father's hand. Hold on tight so that when you stumble, you won't fall!

May your walk today be blessed by the hand of your Father. Rudy

Who are you inviting to dinner? The book of James gives us a different kind of look at faith, healing and sin just to name a few. For instance, James 5:16 links our sin to sickness. That's what I want to talk about today. But up front, I want to warn you not to misunderstand me. All sickness is not the result of a person's sin. Job and the man born blind are our two clear scripture references for that side of the equation. However, that does not mean that some sicknesses are not the result of an individual's sin. The story of Job shows us that Satan has to ask God's permission to touch us. But, I believe that we can also give that permission to Satan; through sin.

When we willfully choose to sin, we invite Satan into our lives. James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." That's the right way to do it. But if we reverse the process by willfully sinning, we are submitting to Satan, not to God. And when Satan has our permission to be in us, I believe he recks us. Of course, there are natural consequences to sin, but I believe that there are supernatural consequences for sin also. For instance, the seed of a cancer cell planted at a young age when a young man embraces a sinful lifestyle. Later, when he returns to God, that permission stops and Satan has to leave, but he has left behind a terrible crop to grow inside the man.

We must strive not to sin and thereby resist Satan, so that he must flee from us. We must also confess our past sins to God and be cleansed from their terrible taint. If you get a chance, just sit down and read the book of James straight through. As always, please send your comments on this devo or any others to me and not to synod!

May God give you the strength to resist sin today! Rudy

Lord of the Dance My wife and I got to spend some time at a church Middle School dance last night. I want to share with you the particular insight I gained from watching the people there. I'll start with myself. (If you do that, it's easier to talk about other people.) My wife and I danced a few dances. When we did it was to the songs that we wanted to dance to and with the practiced steps of twenty plus years of dancing with each other. Next, there were the high schoolers. By one's own words, they were there to act crazy enough that the middle schoolers didn't feel out of place. The middle schoolers, of course, did feel out of place and were very conscious of their peers. They wanted to do it right. It looked rather stiff and uncomfortable. My 4 year old Noah was there and all he wanted to do was act crazy, because the high schoolers were giving him permission to do so.

Then there was Naomi. She is my 2 year old daughter. She didn't care who was looking. She didn't try to follow anyone else's steps or style of dance. She didn't even care if she had a partner. She just moved. It was a most amazing thing and it touched my heart. Her movements were like a direct reflection of the music. Like some kind of interpretive dance. You could tell that the music touched her heart and her expression flowed directly from her heart to her movements. Jesus is Lord of our dance. Sometimes, like my wife and myself, we practice all our lives so we do it just right. Sure, we are following the beat of the music and most of the time it looks good, but what if Jesus calls us to do the rumba instead of the jitterbug? Or like the high schoolers, we just live our lives for the shock value. Or like the middle schoolers and Noah, we try to do things the way someone else says it has to be done. Man's control instead of God's. You get the point. Jesus said it like this, "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Luke 18:17 Most of us learned that this meant our childlike faith for salvation, and, of course, it does. But it also means the way we live our life. God wants to be our music. And He wants us to respond to Him with our heart, our spirit, and move with Him. Jesus wants to be Lord of our dance. Every day. Every moment. Isn't God awesome?

May He guide your steps today! Rudy

Attitude Check!"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Eph 5:1 This section of Ephesians is surrounded with a bunch of don'ts. It talks about anger and unwholesome talk. It says to get rid of all bitterness, rage, brawling and slander. It even says no foolish talk or coarse joking should cross our lips! Hits pretty close to home. As we talked yesterday in class, this doesn't have to do with works righteousness. Our salvation is assured through grace! It has to do with the way God wants us to live as brothers and sisters in Christ. And the message we are to send to an unbelieving world.

Based on our recent local elections, I get the distinct impression that we as Christians are now the politically incorrect group in this free country. I, however, must still wear my "badge of office." I must still be an "imitator of Christ." He did not come into a country where His party controlled the government. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Our faith, especially your faith, our young people, is critical to the millions of lost and dying people in this world. And if we act just like the rest of the world, what good are we? As Veggie Tales would put it we must stand up for what we believe in! And we must live it! Because Christ has shown us the ultimate life of love, we can use that life as our example to allow God to mold our lives and the relationships around us.

Attitude Check? Praise the Lord! Rudy

Accept it! How do you accept God's Grace even when you don't want to? Paul said in 2 Cor 12:8, "There was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me." What Paul wanted was to be healed from his thorn. What he got was grace. He goes on to say, "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you." At this time Paul wanted more than grace, he wanted healing. And the kicker was that the thorn had been given to him to keep him from becoming conceited because of the great revelations that God had given him. Where's the fairness in that?

Sometimes from our perspective God is not fair. But, we don't see things from an eternal perspective; from God's all-knowing perspective. It's like a little child who can't see out of the car window, but he trusts his father to get them where they are going. At some point in time in our lives we have to accept the fact that we can't see out the window. We have to let God guide the car. In fact, sooner or later, we realize that every time we grab the wheel there are disastrous consequences. There are times in our lives that we must cling to the wondrous Grace of God, and remember "how precious did that Grace appear, the hour I first believed." Grace is our anchor. It is the rock of Jesus Christ upon which our faith is built. Sometimes we just have to accept it!

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you today. Rudy

ICONSFor those of you that might have known my Father-in-law, Harold Hiller, you might remember him for a couple of things. For one thing he was a very kind, caring and empathetic Lutheran Pastor. He was also rather persnickety about things. I remember this story he told of one time, in a hospital parking lot, that he was taking his sun shield off of the wind shield of his car. He had parked in the clergy parking spot. Someone walking by noticed that his sunshield had a rainbow on it. Putting the clergy parking together with the rainbow, the person said something like this, "You know that the rainbow is the symbol for gay pride, don't you? You shouldn't use that in the clergy spot." Needless to say my Father-in-law explained that the rainbow was a symbol of promise from God long before it was adopted by the gay community.

Evil is a perversion of good. Satan will try to take everything God has made and twist it just a little. Just enough out of kilter that it is no longer what a Christian should desire. But, remember what God made was and is good. "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it;" Ps 14:1 I am an environmentalist by training, and sometimes it's very frustrated that caring for the earth seems to have fallen to the other side of the political spectrum. We need to hold onto the Icons that God gave us and care for them. The earth, the family or the rainbow. They are all gifts from God. Let us not surrender them to the perversion of Satan. Stand firm! God is in charge! Praise His holy name! Blessings of the Almighty Creator.Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Life, Death and TaxesLife. "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Rom 6:4

Death. "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of the sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor 54-56

Taxes. "This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor." Rom 13:6-7How we Americans dread this day! But, the sting of taxes is certainly less than the sting of death; and as we know the sting of death has been erased for us through our new life in Jesus Christ. Praise be to Jesus Christ who has the victory! Walk this day in the fullness of the victory that He won for you and me!
May the God who owns you and your money give you peace!Rudy.

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Stuck on Love

Unfortunately, my family and I drink a lot of pop. So much so, that we got an old pop machine that the church was getting rid of just to store it. That way it's always cold but doesn't take up room in the fridge. As I said, this pop machine is rather old and doesn't work very well. I keep trying to fix what goes wrong and so far we've kept it functioning. The latest little glitch is that the button that dispenses Mountain Dew is stuck. So if you put your money in it, as soon as you reach 50 cents out comes a Mountain Dew. You don't have a choice on what kind of pop you get. Now for me this is awesome, because I drink Mountain Dew. Everyone else, however, must open the machine and reach in to get their kind of pop.

So I was thinking, maybe I could make my life like that pop machine. Maybe when anyone reached out to push my buttons, all they would get would be love. Like that one guy who always tries to get me mad. When he pushes the angry button, the only thing he'll get is love. Paul puts it this way, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law." Rom 13:8 So the next time you're in a situation and you don't know how to respond, just think of your love button being stuck. You can't go wrong with that response.

May the One who taught us to love fill your hearts and minds with love today. Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

CommunityI miss the community that we had when I was young. It was a small neighborhood in a little farming community in western Kansas. On my block everyone knew each other. Now this was bad if you decided that you were going to try to get away with something. Someone else's mother was just as likely to catch you as your own. But, it was good if you wanted to feel safe and loved and secure. Luke wrote about the early church, "They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people." Acts 2:46 That was community.

Today, we're going to have a community day at my house. We're going to shear the sheep, learn how to weave and spin, make some homemade beer and BBQ! If you're close enough, come on over. It's my attempt to re-capture some of that community of my youth and maybe some of the community of the early believers. Never forget the bond that we share as the body of Christ. Praise be to God for community. Luke ends that chapter with, "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Pray to the Lord of the harvest to add more to your community today.Rudy

Life Changes There was a point in my life 19 years ago today that my life radically changed. If someone would have tried to tell me that it was going to change sooooo much, I would not have believed them. No, it was not the day I became a believer. It was the birth of my first child. A son as a matter of fact; Jason. Today marks another first in my life. Being away from Jason on his birthday. I guess it's like everything God gives us. He gives us a little time to love it then requires that we give it back to Him. Our life is like that, maybe our money is like that, too. Our children are especially like that. What a wonderful gift from God our are children! But, before you know it, there comes a time that they can't make it home for their birthday.

Well, you probably aren't sitting there sobbing like I am, so you can catch this point better than I can throw it. Life, and all the glorious joys that comes with it, is not our own. We have been bought with a price. Each precious gift given to us by God is to be used to glorify Him! "At dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb." "Do not be afraid, for I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said." (Mat 28:1,6) Because He conquered death for us we must live differently. Since the birth of my first son, (well, really after I adjusted to the effects of sleep depravation) I have been praying for God to use Jason and all my children in His service to His Glory. Praise be to the Resurrected God who answers prayer!

Glorify God today with your very life! Rudy

Sorry. First off, I'm sorry that I went out of town and didn't tell you that I would miss yesterday's devotion. But mainly I'm sorry for the people that have to endure this terrible tragedy in Littleton. Please pray for the families that have been touched by this senseless violence. It is so sad. There are no words that are adequate at a time like this. It is my hope and prayer that God will give these parents a person who can hug them and share their burden. It is my hope that people will share the wondrous comfort of the gospel.

The fact is we will all die. The first death. It's the second death that we should be worried about. That is the one that separates us from God. "Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them." Rev 20:6 This is a mystery, but it is most certainly true. This type of tragedy reminds us of the fleetingness of this life on earth. True life has begun for believers in Christ Jesus and will continue forever. We should be recruiting into "The Power Over The Second Death Club" with all our hearts! It is a treasure that it costs nothing to share. And it is worth everything, even more than the whole world. Praise be to Jesus Christ who gives us victory over the grave! Tell everyone what He has done!

May the peace of everlasting life with Jesus be with you today! Rudy

Seduction Most of you who know me, know that I know something about everything. What you might not know is that I don't know a whole lot about anything. Another way of putting the concept is that I am a jack of all trades and master of none. Well, in my life it took me a while to realize that about myself. One thing that helped me see it in myself was a past acquaintance that was really a "know it all." One day it dawned on me that he really didn't know as much as he wanted me to think that he knew. That helped me see it in myself. So anyway, one of the tricks in life is learning who to trust when you need advice.

Proverbs 12:15 (NET) says, "A stubborn fool considers his own way the right one, but a person who listens to advice is wise." This in my mind is someone who submits to accountability of other trusted friends. But, you must pick those friends wisely. Proverbs warns of seduction also; "Wisdom will also save you from the adulterous woman, from the loose woman with her smooth talk." (2:16 NET) This talks of a loose woman, but girls, you must also beware of the loose man. And, of course, your most trusted advisor is still the Lord, and "His intimate advice is with the upright." (Pro 3:32 NET) It is all summed up in Proverbs 3:5, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him." (NIV)

Praise be to the God of all creation who gives us His advise and trusted friends! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Rethink Y2KWell... You see, yesterday we got one of those late spring snows that the front range is so noted for. (It's still snowing, school's canceled, etc.) The power went off in the middle of Dena's shower, then I had to cook her breakfast on the wood stove. So I started thinking about what I had written yesterday, the part about listening to trusted advisors. I thought about Jim Dobson and how I have felt for many years that his counsel was good and centered in the word of God. I realized about the only thing I disagree with him on is this Y2K thing. Even a year ago when we started talking about it, I just felt that it wasn't going to be a big thing. In my mind, I still don't think it's going to be a problem. But, yesterday was just a little taste of how dependent we are on our creature comforts. If someone would have told my great grand father that he might be without power for several weeks, it wouldn't have mattered, but to us it might seem like the end of the world. So here's today's point. 2 Peter says, "for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him." We should not be a slave to anything, because Christ has set us free! But we go and let all kinds of things control us. I think technology has a hold on a lot of people. So I think that's the message. Try to minimize your dependence on things. Be dependent only on God. I know the monks went a little overboard on this concept, but how many of us have tried to go without just to see if whatever was getting the way of our relationship with God? Anyway, think about it and try to distinguish between things that aren't important and relationships that really are important. Praise God who sends the snow to water the earth!Rudy

The MarkAs my children were being baptized, my Father-in-law said, "Receive now the mark of the cross, both upon the forehead and upon the chest, as a token of one who has been redeemed." Those words are always a comfort to me, but this morning I started thinking about them in context with a subject that has come up in our Sunday class several times. Tattooing. And, of course, as we discussed this in class we went to the old testament and came up with verses and basically decided that there was nothing wrong with the modern "art" of tattooing. But, as I was thinking about the words of baptism this morning, I think there's another perspective to consider.

In Ezekiel 9 all the remnant of Israel that lament over the evil that has been done are marked on the forehead by an angel, then at the command of God, all who do not have the mark are killed. Period. In Revelation the familiar story of the Antichrist and his mark is told. "He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark." (13:16) And in Ephesians 2:13 we're told that "Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit." I believe that from my baptism, I already have that mark or seal of the Holy Spirit. But if I thought I could go out and get a tattoo that would show the world an outward sign of that inward seal I would get that tattoo. I'm afraid that most other tattoos might fall into the other "mark" category. Certainly, any Satanic or devilish figures should not be worn by one marked with the Holy Spirit. But I think that many other designs would not be appropriate. If God and His word take the issue of marks on our body so seriously, should we not also consider it a serious subject?

Now, I'd better put another paragraph in here for all of you who already have had the art of tattooing practiced on your body. Christ judges the heart, and just as nothing that goes into our stomachs can make us unclean (Mark 7), nothing that we can put on our bodies can separate us from the Love of God. But, I see it as a matter of public witness. What is so important to your life that you are willing to endure the pain of tattooing? I would hope nothing but the Kingdom of Heaven and the love of Jesus. He showed us that love when He endured the cross and the grave so that we might be free, no longer under the law which condemns tattooing, but under grace which takes us "just as I am." But let us not use that grace as a license to do just whatever we want, but let us examine our lives and our actions based on His ultimate "body piercing" sacrifice for us.

May the God of all love and peace be and abide with you, now and forever more!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

Lined area for writing thoughts, consisting of 21 horizontal lines.

And your drawings:

A House Divided How many times have we thought that we could handle just a little sin? Is there such a thing as a little lust? a little hatred? a little coveting? Or we think that I've mastered that particular sin so I can put myself back in the environment that led to the sin in the first place. I'm not sure about this, but I think most recovering alcoholics will not go to bars, putting themselves into the path of temptation. But it seems to be like that with us sometimes. We fool ourselves, or we let Satan convince us that we can handle it without sinning. You're probably thinking, that the other guys have problems with this, but not me. I challenge you to look closely at yourselves!

Jesus said, "a house divided against itself will fall." (Luke 11:17) He didn't say "may fall" or "might teeter a little bit", He said "WILL FALL." Do not divide yourselves! Do not give Satan a foothold by willing waltzing into his domain. Instead do like Joseph, FLEE. Set up your own boundaries when your in your right mind. Write them down if you have to. And then, "to thine own self be true." Don't give in at the least little prodding from your friends. Or even just a yearning from the remote control late at night. Unless you give it away, the remote, your friends or any of those other things have no power over you.

May the God of amazing grace keep you from falling. Rudy

My Horses Can't Limbo Sunday morning I went out to feed my horses and realized that they had reeked two of the three boards in one section of the fence. Somehow, they had broken the top and bottom boards and left the middle one in place. For one thing they get rather disgruntled with this very wet and sloppy weather. So they were on their way out of the corral. What amazed me was that just one board had stopped them. I could easily duck under it, and I'm sure most of our youth group could have even limboed under it. The horses don't understand the concept of limbo and duck. God created them to run. They are so beautiful when they run, and many times their beauty has reminded me of the awesome greatness of their creator.

On the other hand God did create us with an amazing ability to get around. We can't run as fast as a horse, but we can climb a sheer vertical wall of rock. And we can duck and limbo. But how many times does our inability to trust God paralyze us just as surely as those horses were held in with just one board. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Phil 4:13 Paul wrote this little gem about money or the lack of it while he was in prison. When we are in Christ and His will, there is nothing that we cannot do. The trick, I believe is to be centered in Christ through prayer and study and then ask Him to remove the obstacles that hold us back. There is so much strength in any one of those horses that they would have just had to lean on that board and it would have popped in two. But they could not see it or believe it. We can do both through the eyes of Christ. We have all heard the story of the girl (I am ashamed I don't know her name) who when faced by the gunman in the library at Columbine High School and asked who believed in God, she stood up and said she did. It took the strength of Christ to do that. And she is in the arms of her Savior right now! Dear Lord, give me strength today to serve you in whatever way you want to use me. Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
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And your drawings:

Rage! I just looked out at the sunrise! Praise God for making each day new! For all of you who have never gotten angry, you can take a break until tomorrow; everyone else, read on. I specifically remember walking home from school when I was in the fourth grade, and almost every afternoon getting in a fight with this guy named Burt. One day, I was the one who ended up in the gutter, and some guy saw the whole thing. He stopped his car next to us and got out. Amazingly, it was Burt's Sunday School teacher. That was the last time I remember fighting with Burt. But it told me, even at that age, that God was extremely interested in my anger.

I have since learned that there is another step that anger can take. Rage. I have never felt more out-of-control than in a fit of rage. There's a reason they call it a fit. I think that is the time we have just opened the door wide to Satan and invited him right on in. And with our permission, he makes a wreck of our relationships and our life. "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Eph 4:31-32. I recently went on a retreat called the Via de Christo, and while there God gave me insight into a new tool that I can use to combat my anger and rage. Every time I get mad at one of my kids, I must kneel in front of them. For one thing, it's hard to stay mad when your below someone looking up at them. It also reminds me to pray. That, of course, helps a lot. I just hope I don't get mad out on the work site. I don't really want to be kneeling there.

Anger, just like everything else, is a really big thing if we try to go it alone, but with God it becomes manageable, even surmountable. Call upon Him when you need Him and He'll be there. I promise.

May the God of all peace be with you today! Rudy

Finals!For many of you, the dreaded finals week is coming up soon. But you know, even though this is a rather difficult and intense time, the feeling is not unique to finals week. How you approach finals may give you a little insight on how you might approach life. I know there are those of you who say something like, I know this will be enough to get by, and I'm already getting a good grade, I'll just skate. I think that was my attitude in college. Then there are others who will burn the midnight oil, sacrificing health and friendships for the all important grade. In case you can't tell by my tone, I think both approaches are wrong. Yes, we have to strive for excellence, but we must also strive for balance. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out before us." Heb 12:1 The runner of the race must focus on the race, but he must also pace himself so he has the energy to finish. Life is like that also. But the very next words are our key. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus." With our eyes fixed on Jesus, we can make it through finals and we can make it through life! Pace yourselves, but run hard! May God give you strength and bear you up on wings like eagles!Rudy

Be Bold! Be Strong!For the Lord Your God is with you!

We are under a flash flood warning and yesterday I actually got to watch a flood come down a narrow side canyon in the pass and shut down the road. It was neat. But this weather reminds me of a similar late snow on the first weekend in May, 25 years ago. As a young, naive 18 year old I had organized a statewide youth gathering at the Y camp in the mountains west of here. I remember thinking that everything was falling apart. I turned to the Camp director and poured out my heart to him, telling him that the retreat was a flop. He tried to tell me that things weren't as bad as I thought they were, and besides, he said, "What a safe place to fail." That didn't give me a whole lot of comfort. To this day, I don't remember what was going wrong, except the weather. That I remember very well. It snowed so hard in 24 hours that we were lucky to just get out of there and the next day a damn broke and took out the whole highway for 8 miles.

The point is that I think it is better to have tried and failed, than to have never tried at all. In the parable of the talents, the third servant, who only got one talent was afraid of the master, so he hid his talent in the ground. The master responds, "You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest." Mat 25:26 I believe God prefers action to inaction. After making plans, counting the cost, and laying them before God in prayer, unless He tells you no, just do it! Don't let risk of failure paralyze you into just doing nothing. Soon nothing with today turns into nothing with tomorrow and then nothing with your whole life. There wasn't a servant that failed in the parable, except the one that did nothing, because God will bless your actions. Maybe not in the way you think He should, but He will bless them.

Go with God and use the talents He has given you for His Glory!**Rudy**

The River The River doesn't want to be stopped once it gets going. It was really interesting to me to see all the efforts that people are making to try to keep our little Fountain Creek in its banks. They even mobilized the National Guard to try to help the residents of Manitou who live and work along the creek. Keep in mind it's only things; buildings, roads, bridges; that they are trying to save. As far as I know this hasn't threatened any lives. But it was interesting how hard it is to hold back a river. It reminded me of the song that says, "We'll have peace like a river." So I went in search of the Bible reference for that concept. Listen to what Isaiah says in Chapter 48:17ff.

This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you would have paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Your descendants would have been like the sand, your children like its numberless grains; their name would never be cut off nor destroyed from before me."

I think we should learn from the mistakes of the children of Israel. Here's the choice; (1) Do what God wants and get peace like a river and lots (and lots) of kids, or (2) Do what we want and get thrown into Babylonian exile. Gee, that doesn't seem like a tough choice, but for some reason I think we are still trying to do things our way. As the saying goes, this isn't rocket science, folks. Do what God commands, and just see if you can stop the river of His goodness. Praise God for His Goodness and Grace!

May His peace flow with you today! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Neither Yesterday in class we talked about a life that was neither really working for God, nor doing the evil that God hates, but was just getting by. One that was certainly not against God but found itself going from day to day caught in the grind of making a living, raising kids, going to and from work and just letting the days pass by. I am afraid especially in this society, that the temptation to that kind of lifestyle is very great. Instead of the computer age giving us more leisure time, it has seemed to suck what little leisure time we had away from us. It seems like the masses are working harder, buying more stuff, but living life less.

Here's one verse that we didn't think of in class that I think applies directly to the neither lifestyle. "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm- neither hot nor cold- I am about to spit you out of my mouth." Rev 3:15-16 So what is the solution for a lukewarm, neither kind of life? (Hint, it's the same answer to almost every question asked at the children's sermon) Jesus! Let the Spirit into your life through God's word and prayer, and let Jesus motivate you to be a life on fire for God! Don't settle for mediocre. Don't settle for a lukewarm life! Be everything that God wants you to be.

Praise be to the God who gives us life! Rudy

Life! What a precious gift. I'm going to do something different today. I'm going to forward stuff written by others. Some of you who are far away may not know the struggle that the tragedy at Columbine in Littleton has created here. First I'll share something that John wrote. "Greater love has no one than this, that he (or she) lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13

Now a letter written by the parents of Cassie Bernall: April 23, 1999 We have not read any papers nor watched much TV since we learned our Cassie was a victim, but I am told that she was the young woman who boldly answered to a gunman, "YES" when he asked if she believed in God, prompting him to pull the trigger. Cassie's response does not surprise us. Her life was rightly centered around our Lord Jesus. It was for her strong faith in God and his promise of eternal life that she made her stand. It is clear to me that this tragic incident has been thrown back into the face of Satan and his followers with an impact that is much greater than was intended for us, God's children. Misty, Chris, I, all our family and Cassie's youth group are proud of her. We will painfully miss her every day of our lives. She truly was our "little buddy" and a terrific friend to her brother Chris. To all the young people who hear this, don't let my daughter's death be for nothing. Make your stand. If you not in the local church's youth group, try it. They want you and will help support you in doing what is right. It's not easy, you will need one another. To all parents across our nation I would say, "Do you know what your kids are doing? Do you verify?" You should. We are the front line in all issues regarding our children.

Easy Yoke. Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matt 11:28-30 This is a powerful passage, and I'm sure many Theologians have written about it's deep meanings. But I think Jesus is communicating something very profound and at the same time very simple. As with many of His teachings we can read them our whole life and never fully understand them, or always gain new insight from reading them again.

But today, let's be simple. Let's just take the yoke of Jesus upon ourselves and attempt to learn how to be like Jesus. He promises it will be easy; something that we can do. He says that He is gentle and humble in heart. I think that this flies in the face of most of the assertiveness training that is going on these days. Today, let's try to be "gentle and humble in heart" in all our dealings with others. At the end of our day, maybe we'll find a little more rest for our souls. I think of that like a soothing balm that Jesus just rubs over our hurting and aching heart.

Please Lord, help us to understand what you mean when you tell us to be gentle and humble in heart, and help us to live it today.

May the God of all peace, grant you rest for your soul today!Rudy

Milestones Today marks sort of a milestone. I leave to retrieve my Jason from his first year of college. I started these daily devos for several reasons. One certainly was for Jason. But another reason was because one of the older students had told me last year that she had gone off to college and when she returned home, there was no place for her at church. No comfortable home like the youth group she had left. This was my attempt at building "community" over a long distance relationship. Many now will come home, and I hope feel like they belong to our group. But, of course, many that are part of our extended group live else where.

When I'm in town, I will continue to write, until such time I have nothing left to write about. I've enjoyed this slow motion discussion with many people on many subjects. As this maybe a goodbye for some of you, I offer these words of Paul as he closes his letter to the Ephesians, "Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love." Eph 6:23-24 May God go with each one of you as you seek to serve Him in your own special called way, with the gifts that He has personally given you in order to serve Him more fully.

Peace. Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

We are not our own. I've been to a lot of auctions. In fact, I rather enjoy the bidding process. Sometimes people, not me mind you, but other people, can get caught in the frenzy of the competition of the bidding. They might even pay a little more for an item than it may be worth in a store, just so they don't "lose." But after you have won the bid and you have become the new owner of a particular item, there is a kind of ownership that takes over. All of a sudden, you're a little more interested in how the auction helpers handle the precious item that you just bought. You watch as the one guy hands it to another helper, that is entirely too young to be working the auction, and you hope that it gets back to the checkout area, so you can get your hands on it before it's gets dropped and broken.

God has bought us, with the holy precious blood of His only Son, having outbid Satan and the world with the ultimate price that anyone ever paid for anything. And after He has paid such a high price for such a fragile item, I think He is especially worried about our treatment here on earth. But we are our own worst handlers. No one forces us to smoke or drink or overeat. (The last one, of course, is a punch that hits a little too close to my midsection.) "For we are the temple of the living God." 2 Cor 6:16 In this easy society of post Christian modern North America, anything goes. Total disrespect of the "temple of the living God" is not a wise or prudent thing to do. As for me and my temple, with the help of God, I am going to take better care of myself. Sounds like a New Years resolution, doesn't it? Well, just think of this whole year as the December of a New Millennium. I hope that the foolishness of youth will not give permission to abuse God's temple. And for those past that stage, I hope the laziness of the easy chair won't win out over the walk around the block.

You are God's house of living stones! Care for it well! May the Living God that purchased you with the highest bid ever paid, bless you and keep you from this time now and forevermore. Rudy

Surgery Jason had the distinct honor of having his wisdom teeth removed yesterday. I'm sure it won't be long, however, until his smile returns to normal. I also did a little surgery on my email address book. I'm trying to keep it up to date without missing anyone that still wanted to stay on the list. (Please let me know if you're getting these but didn't want to.) Any kind of surgery is painful. We endure the pain because we know that in the long run it will be better for us. That's the same thought expressed in Peter.

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed." 1 Peter 4:12-13 By in large, in this country for the last 200 years we have been able to live out a Christian life without persecution. We need to pray that it might continue! Many are predicting that the age of tolerance will be for all **but** Christians. If that is the case, then we will join the first century Christians in rejoicing in our sufferings. But I pray that it's not too late! Please pray for this great country of ours. Please add it to your daily prayer list. I know it's hard to remember when we take it for granted. But, I'm praying that my children will know the same freedoms that I have enjoyed in my lifetime.

Whatever may come, we look forward to the time that we may be overjoyed at the revelation of Christ's Glory. Praise be the name of Jesus Christ!

May the God of strength support you today! Rudy

It's Alive! We have a number of names for Christ. A couple that we might not be as familiar with are *sophia* or wisdom from Proverbs, or Word of Jehovah from Genesis and Isaiah or the one I want to talk about today, *Logos* or Word from John. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:1 and 14. I want to try and share a point that Jason and Mike talked about in class last Sunday.

Because Jesus came in the flesh and dwells within us His Word has meaning for us. Unlike the Pharisees, where in John 8:43 Jesus is saying that they can't understand His language because they are unable to hear His Words (*Logos*). We **can** understand His language because we have part in Him. He is the Word. For us the Word is alive! And we are part of it because the author dwells within us and the Holy Spirit makes the words clear to us. I encourage you to somehow take part in the Word of our Lord each and every day. It is like feeding on Mother's milk when we are young and like eating protein rich meat when we are growing. There is no better source of strength for a Christian than a regular diet of God's Word. Bring along a dessert of prayer and worship and you have a complete meal.

He is Risen! He is Alive! He is Alive for us! Rudy

Sticky HandsI don't like to be sticky. Maybe my Mom was really good at getting me to wash when I was young or something, but I really don't like sticky hands. It's even so bad that I don't like to eat sopapias because there is no way to keep the honey off your hands. But with seven children, it's usually a good bet that there is a sticky hand somewhere that wants to be held. As Hannah and I walked to school yesterday, with her sticky hand in mine, I did some thinking on this subject. God takes us where we are, even if we have sticky hands, He will reach out and take a hold of our hand. "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly" Rom 5:6 We are to live by Christ's example. Our churches should be open to all, no matter where in their walk they happen to be. Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:31 Christ didn't wait until our hands were clean to reach out to us. As a matter of fact, He leads us gently to the water to wash. It is this love and acceptance we are to emulate. I have a new policy with my children. I will always hold their hand, no matter how sticky it might be.

Reach out today and share the love of Christ and don't be afraid of sticky hands. May the God of Grace who has called each one of us by name be with you now and forever!**Rudy**

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

In His Steps Over spring break, we went to visit Pastor Pete in Kansas. Having been from Kansas, I knew that the opportunities for activities might be limited, so we planned a fishing trip. Pete and I, with our children, headed out to a local hot spot, and proceeded to stand there and watch the water flow by. So a couple of hours later we see a group of fishermen coming from downstream with a big stringer full of fish. So we decide to head that way. So I'm carrying about five fishing poles and a tackle box or two and Pete is carrying Noah. The net effect is, I didn't have any hands to help Hannah and the way was fairly muddy. But we came up with a great system. If I walked through the mud first, I left an impression that she could then step in without sinking into the mud. It's interesting that Hannah suggested that I use this concept for a devotion.

So here's how I think it ties in. This world has a lot of muddy, even filthy places. Sometimes to get to where we're going our path might have to cross these places. If we follow the guidance of God, we can avoid becoming stuck in the mud and losing our way. Psalm 119 has several things to say about this concept. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." 105 and "Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me." 133 It is amazing the filth in this world that is trying to reach out and grab each one of us. But if we follow the footsteps prescribed by God we won't be trapped. May the Risen Lord guide your steps today! Rudy

Hot PantsThe weather is finally starting to warm up. It is truly a delight to enjoy springtime in the Rockies; that is the spring that starts mid to end of May. But with this weather comes all the little tiny clothes that girls wear. In my high school and college days it was halter tops and hot pants. Who knows what it is today. My Son just told me that their English class is going to see an R rated movie about Shakespeare. Because it's a classic, I guess the nudity is supposed to be OK. I know girls aren't the same as guys, but I do understand the way guys react to things like this. It's like having a powerful race car, starting the engine and revving it up, but you can't drive it anywhere. All you do is get hot and bothered.

Jesus said in Mat 5:28, "I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." I know this is so tough that we just forget it sometimes, but lust is bad! I don't know the absolute answer to this, but one thing that might help, is when you see a pretty girl, maybe you should just say, "Wow, didn't God do a good job there!" And then look the other way. Don't dwell on it. Don't give Satan a foothold into your precious and very vulnerable mind.

Go in God's peace and enjoy the summer that God has given to us.Rudy

Treasure!What would you say if I told you that I had been excavating for a water line on my property and had dug up a gold shipment that had been buried there from a train robbery 100 years ago? And, there's no other claim on the money. And, there's plenty to share! In fact the valuation of this gold is such that it's virtually limitless. I can share with you and still have plenty for myself. You can even share with your friends and have plenty left. "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field." Mat 13:44

If I had found this gold, you can bet that the news would travel fast. I would tell my family and friends. As a matter of fact, many people that I did not want to know would probably find out about it. I would have stock brokers calling me; my neighbors would get chummy all of a sudden. The newspapers would probably even do a piece on it. Well, I haven't found gold. But, the treasure that we have found is even more precious than gold! And unlike gold, it doesn't lessen its value when you share it. In fact, it grows when you share it. It becomes more precious to you and to the person that you shared it with.

So, let me ask you this. Are you ashamed of the gospel of Christ? Are you ashamed to share a treasure that will mean eternal life for the one who finds it? I'm afraid that we all are at times. But just think, if you were rich enough to pull out a twenty dollar gold piece (worth about \$350 today) and hand one to everyone you meet, wouldn't you share? Well, you are that rich, in the treasure that means the most to people when it really counts. Share the wealth. Share the Gospel of Jesus Christ! He once was dead, but now He is alive! And He is truly more precious than gold.

May you be generous with the gifts that God has given you, today!**Rudy**

Build Up! I think that the desire to control is the main reason that people tear down each other. Of course, any who have read even a few of my devotions know that control is a big topic of mine. God is in control. When we try to wrestle it away from Him or the ones that He has put in charge, we get into trouble. But, I would think that once we become adults that we would realize that this whole living on earth is a team effort. Can you imagine being stranded on a desert island with no other person? It may be fun for a while, but I think I would become lonely very quickly. God created us in His image, and I believe one aspect of that is our need for community; our need for relationships.

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up." 1 Thess 5:11 I know that there are some relationships that are built on abuse and intimidation, but they are not healthy. When we encourage and build up someone else we are strengthening that relationship. We are strengthening that person. If we are insecure about our own abilities and our own worth, then sometimes it can come out as trying to control another person through tearing them down. Each one of us need to realize that the only reason we are worth anything is because Christ died for us. It's not even something we can take credit for, but we can base our entire self worth on it! So the next time you are talking bad about someone, either to their face or behind their back, remember that Christ died for them, too. Ask His forgiveness, and then ask Him to control you, your life, and your tongue.

Praise God, who gives us life! Rudy

SubmissionThis is one of those tough topics that the secular world doesn't even admit exists. We as Christians have been branded as backwards because of the recent publicity on the subject, and personally I have a problem with it. Not a problem in knowing what the Bible teaches about it, just a problem doing it. Yesterday we had a surprise inspection from OSHA on the job site. This is kind of what most contractors fear worst, because OSHA has very complicated rules, and very stiff fines. But really after the inspector was gone, I had to deal with the attitude of submission. There's no doubt that at sometime in your life, no matter who you are, you will have to submit to someone. I believe that if you have practiced submitting to God, it will come easier to submit to the right person at the right time. Job 22:21 tells us to "Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you." And in Hebrews it says, "Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our Spirits and live!" (12:9) Both of these verses have a promise if we do submit to God. That should be a little incentive to believe that the "Father knows best." By the way, I passed the two bigges on the OSHA inspection but she dinged me on a little reg that I didn't even know existed. There's another point there. We should study the regulations - the Bible - so that we don't have to say to God, "I didn't know that was important to you." Go with the peace of God, the Mighty and Merciful Father of us all!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

ImportunityI've always liked the word importunity. Perhaps it was as a confirmation student I first tried to understand what it meant. But God, in His infinite wisdom decided that I wouldn't really understand the word unless He gave me a son that embodied and defined the word with his very being. His name is Noah. For those who don't know Noah as well as I do, let me give you the dictionary's definition. It says that importunity is "persistence in solicitation." The word itself is only used in the Bible (KJV) once in Luke 11:8. It's the story of a man who has a friend arrive late at his home and he goes to his neighbor to borrow some bread. "And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth."

Now, I've been taught in all these parenting classes that if you say no to your child, that you have to back it up and not give in. That concept is most difficult to hold to with my 4 year old Noah. And without his living example I do not think I would know the true meaning of "persistence in solicitation." He just flat won't give up. God is telling us that that is how we are to pray to Him. The literal interpretation of the Greek calls it "shameless insisting." How many of us truly pray that way? Well, now you know that you are supposed to. And if you still don't quite understand it, I could probably arrange for Noah to spend a little time with you.

Pray with shameless insisting to the God of all creation.Rudy

Bigger BarnsAs some of my writings might do at times, this might ruffle your feathers a bit. Of course, it's just my opinion. But if it causes you to at least think about the subject, maybe that's good enough. Jesus was talking about greed in Luke 12:13ff and he told a story of a certain rich man who had been blessed with really good harvests. The man had no place to store the harvest, so he decided to tear down his barns and build bigger barns, then "Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." But then God says to him that that very night he will die. It ends with this admonition, "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." The more you think about that statement the deeper it gets.

An early Christian writer suggests that the man should have stored his increase in the bellies of the poor. I am sure we could have thoughts of many things the man could have done with the extra bounty. But, I would like to bring it closer to home. Do you think that in this society that, some times, Bigger Barns might equal retirement accounts? Or Bigger Barns might equal Long term, High yield CDs? Maybe his bigger barns might have held enough for him to live on for 5 to 10 years, but our bigger barns sometimes might be enough to run a small country. Where then is our trust? Is it in our Lord Jesus Christ who supplies everything we need to support this body and life, or is our trust in our Bigger Barns? OK, now that everyone is a little miffed at me,

May the Lord of all bless you and keep you now and forevermore!Rudy

BUT...Of course the BUT is important! Yesterday I wrote about bigger barns. I used Luke 12:20-21 which is the summation verse of Jesus when He is talking about the man who built bigger barns. He says, "But is not rich towards God." Yes, the "but is the all important word. So let's take a test. Assume you had a nice little retirement account, that you planned to use to live on in about 10 years or so. Of course, it's grown nicely since the economy has done so well and you figure that in about 10 years there will be enough in there that you don't have to work, but you can enjoy your retirement. Now say a brother comes to you and has fallen on hard times. He is in desperate need of money and flat out asks you for money to help him through. Do you give him some or all of that retirement account, or not? Now I know that there's always more to the story, and you can never really know what you might do in a particular situation, but the real question is; Where is your trust? Is it in the retirement account or the Good and Gracious God that gave you the retirement account in the first place? Have you built up a treasure on earth that has locked up your heart and thrown away the key? Jesus started the whole story of the man and his bigger barns with this warning, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Luke 12:14 Bank accounts and CD's and retirement accounts can be used by the enemy to gradually change your attitude towards giving and your neighbor. They can harden your heart. Don't be greedy with your money or your love. May God's Precious Gift to us inspire us to freely give! Rudy

TimingI've come up with a few sayings that have helped me through difficult times in the past, and for some reason I've been using one more often lately, so I thought I would share it with you. It goes like this: God is very rarely early; but He is never, ever late. As a good axiom does, I feel this applies to many different situations. Many times in my past it has applied to money. And through making me wait, I know God has refined my trust in Him as our family's sole provider. But it can also apply to many other things; Plans for example. There are many times in my life that I have this wonderful idea and God will just tell me to wait. One of the neatest things that happens during that waiting is that I turn my plans over to God. Then when they are finally realized, the glory is His not mine.

One of my more favorite verses in this area is Proverbs 3:5-6. The following quote is from the New Evangelical Translation (NET). "Trust the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge (give credit to) Him, and He will make your paths smooth." Once again, as we see so often with these kernels of wisdom, it is so easy to say that we do this and possibly make a beginning; but so difficult to follow it all the way and live our lives by it. It says "In all your ways." God does not want to be compartmentalized. He wants all of our lives; all of our nitty, gritty details. And He promises to make our paths smooth. Try it -- you'll like it! May the God who directs our steps, be ever more near and dear to you!Rudy

Have Faith! "Take up the shield of faith, which can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." Eph 6:16 Does God promise that He will stop Satan from aiming at us and giving it his best shot? No. In fact, there are many verses that say that we will actually experience more of the world's crap just because we are striving to follow after God with our lives. But God doesn't leave us defenseless. He has given us faith. And I know from personal experience that God, at certain times in our lives, gives us more faith because we need it.

Picture yourself fighting in a battle of the 1400s where you are forced to charge an enemy stronghold where they have archers on the top battlements. They have covered the tip of their arrows with pitch and on command they light and fire a volley of arrows at your army. Can you imagine fighting that battle without a shield to hold over your head? I assure you that we are in an ever more dangerous struggle in the world of today. Without the shield of faith, you will be left poked and burning. Our only defense is a saving faith in the Almighty Creator of the Universe! The arrows and the flames will seem small and insignificant someday, when we are carried home to the loving arms of our personal Lord, who by His very life assured us of the great gift of salvation. He had to hold up His arms and take on our sin, how can we not have faith? It seems such a small thing to do. But yet, it will make all the difference in the world.

Stand Firm! Have Faith! For the Lord your God is with you! Rudy

Cast System I used to believe that the guy who was homeless had probably made choices that got him there. Or that the mother on welfare could do something about it if she really wanted to. I used to believe that we could lift ourselves out of any situation with our own bootstraps. But I have come to the conclusion that our enlighten society, one ready to move into a new millennium with Y2K compliant computers, makes homeless people and dependent mothers just as surely as any backwards society of the dark ages. For some reason, it must be inevitable when a government seeks to solve social ills that it will fail. It will become rife with corruption or just bureaucracy, that will doom it to failure. I believe that individuals are the only solution to poverty. The caring must be on a one to one basis, or when we join together in a small community to help those around us. God gives us the solution in Isaiah 58:6ff when He tells us the true way to fast. "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and provide the poor wanderer with shelter-when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?" As with societies down through the ages, we are to busy to stop and find out what we can do for the guy on the street corner who is panhandling. Of course, some do it just as a scam, but how many really need our help and we stereotype them to make ourselves feel better? Consider picking a day of the week to fast. Not with the goal of looking pious, but with the goal of looking to someone that needs your help, that literally needs the food that you are not eating that day. I believe that there is a place for fasting in the life of a New Testament Christian. Think about it. May the God who provides all good things, bless you and your family today! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Half Full? Today, I thought I would take on one of the really deep questions of the Universe. Is the glass half full or half empty? As you know, this question has to do with your attitude. Some people think that whether they are an optimist or a pessimist has to do with their genes. And maybe one is wired with a tendency towards one slant or the other. But, I believe the difference between an optimist and a pessimist is a matter of choice. Most people would agree that the optimist is a happier person. So if they are happier and it's a choice why aren't all of us optimists? Now that's the really deep question.

Proverbs says in 15:15, "Every day is a terrible day for a miserable person, but a cheerful heart has a continual feast."

(NET) Now, I am basically an optimist, but there are days that I would just like to roll up into a pity party and be miserable. The thing that I use the most, that works the best, to pull me out of the pity party is a promise that is for all who love God, Romans 8:28. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." You see, the trick to making the choice to be an optimist is to really believe that God is working things out for your best, no matter what happens. It's like putting total trust in God's ability, and zip in our own to control our destiny. So is my Mountain Dew can half full? You bet it is!

Praise God for taking care of the details. Rudy

Not return Void. God gives us an awesome Promise. His Word has power and as the KJV says, "will not return void." We are but the messenger, and the message we carry has a life and power of it's own. Here's the whole concept as set forth in Isaiah 55:10-11: "As the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty." What an awesome promise! We are but to share the Word of God and trust Him with the response. I have seen that happen with the College age ministry and these little morning devotions. These were originally meant to bind the College age students into a group, so that they didn't feel separated when they were off at a far away college. But God has done so much more!

It is such an awesome joy to be the messenger. If you haven't tried it lately, you should. It is not unlike planting a garden of flowers in the spring. Watching them grow and bud a perhaps bear fruit is a very rewarding experience; one of God's greater gifts on this earth. The College age ministry has been like that for me. And I know it's a reward that God wants each one of us to experience. So as you plant your spring garden think of how God might be calling you to plant His Word. It is an awesome calling. One that each Christian has. To God alone be the Glory!
May each one of you walk in His will for you today! Rudy

A TestOK, now, this is a test. Without jumping ahead, do you know who said these words? "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes-I, and not another. How my heart yearns with in me!" I'm really going to talk about another kind of test today, but did you pass this one? Did you know that Job said those words in the midst of his suffering? 19:25ff He also said this, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." 1:21

I am afraid that in this society we are being tested. And I believe that it is a much harder test to pass than a sudden loss of all that is dear to us, as Job had to endure. The test I am talking about is having bounty. We in America, and I am sure many of us individually are blessed with so much bounty, so many good things, and all are gifts from God. Not because we worked hard, not even because we were good and deserve it; simply gifts from God. Do we acknowledge Him as the giver? Do we have our priorities right in our stewardship? Do we use our blessings to be a blessing to our fellow man? Jesus tells us in Luke 12:48, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." For just a moment today, think about how you are doing in the test. Stand before God and give Him an accounting of your effort and see how you stand. This test is between you and God and no other. Thank God for bounty! May we use it wisely!

Made the giver of all good things bless you in your walk!Rudy

The Rock This last weekend we had a family retreat, and the major project of the retreat was to build a bird house that in some way represented your family. In many ways the struggles that everyone went through in the building of this bird house represented the struggles that we actually go through in real life to build a family. Communication was a biggie. The design of the bird house had to be discussed between the family members and then the mental images that each family member had brought together into one design. Then that design had to be actually constructed. In most cases the end product was not exactly what each family had in mind. We were either limited by time or materials or the ability to build exactly what we envisioned.

Isn't that so much like what real life hands us? We have this grand plan for exactly where we want to go in life and then time or resources or even just the technical ability to get it done gets in the way. Nothing past even the next moment in our lives can be absolutely directed by us. But with a good foundation we can be relatively sure of the overall direction. Jesus says this about that foundation: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." Mat 7:24 As we build our lives we can only control the foundation and that is Jesus Christ and His words. Then as we put them into practice our life is built.

Praise God for His ability as my General Contractor!

Go in peace this day and serve Him as you serve others. Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

FreedomYes, it is most certainly appropriate to remember all who have given their lives in defense of this great country. Whether it was in a war or a "conflict," whether it was at home or on a distant soil, it is extremely humbling that someone would choose to give his life for my freedom. But, we have our freedom because the Lord chooses to bless us with it. And I am afraid that we have an attitude in this country that it was our own doing. And with that comes the ability to lose it to an internal conflict that we are not even paying attention to, even though everyone knows about it. It may be honorable to fight and die for the freedom of our fellow country men, but in the eyes of many in this country it is wrong to fight for the life of the unborn. So much so that our own police force can take their badges off and "escort" us forcibly off the battle field.

Proverbs 16:33 says, "The dice are thrown, but the Lord determines every outcome." It is my firm belief that the battle raging over the life of the unborn in our country is a greater threat to our freedom than any other war or conflict fought in our history. God is the one who has given us our freedom and I believe that we are trying His patience. He may simply decide that we are no longer worthy to enjoy this wonderful blessing of freedom and take it from us, in order that we as a society might learn anew the responsibilities that come with freedom. And maybe, if we were engaged in a battle on our own soil for our very lives we would be less interested in killing defenseless children; our very own sons and daughters.

Please pray against the stronghold of abortion. Please pray for a wake up call for this great country of ours to return to the values that made us great! Please pray that that wake up call will not be the loss of our freedom!

May the Lord of all, even the unborn, keep you safe today!Rudy

Vacation! Well, it's finally that coveted time of my year where we are planning the family vacation. I do really look forward to getting out of the routine of the daily grind and spending time with the wonderful family that God has blessed me with. But, it seems that every year it is harder to arrange everyone's schedules; it costs more; it's more difficult to satisfy everyone's destination desires; and on and on. So as I was reading Proverbs, this verse jumped out at me, "A person may plan his own journey, but the Lord directs his steps." Pro 16:9 It is such a comfort for me to know that God is still in charge in even my little "journey."

There's another verse just before that that even helps more; "Entrust your works to the Lord, and your plans will succeed." 16:3 So I'm trying to do the hard part, just turning everything over to God and letting go of my control. But you know, God is really good and helps me do even that little thing. So wherever you're bound and whatever your plans for this summer might be, remember that God is still involved, even in the small stuff (like rental cars). Entrust everything that you do to the Lord and let Him bless you!

Go in the peace of God, Creator of all! Rudy

Soften the clay. Well, my four year old little Noah keeps giving me things to write about. He is such a blessing to me. He has absolutely unconditional love for me that I am awed by it. But, he has a strength of will that I have never before witnessed in my life. As we continue to work through the temper tantrums, I have had this mental image of a potter working on a large and beautiful pot. I have very little experience on the potting wheel myself, but enough to know that it is harder than it looks. To mold the clay and not break it is the goal. I am trying desperately to mold Noah without breaking him. Each time we go through our little discipline sessions I think I gain a little ground. It would be so easy for a heavy hand to break his spirit right now and I am trying very hard not to do that.

That very concept may be why some of us view God as working slowly in our lives. I know He is the Master Potter and we have the promise that He will not break a bruised reed. (Isaiah 42:3) So at times, I know at least with me, He has had to work slowly to bring my stubborn will around to His direction without breaking me in the process. "Yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand." Isaiah 64:8 Oh Lord, I pray that I may be like soft clay in your hands, yielding to your direction and purpose. Please mold me and make me. Blessed be your Name above all names! Amen.

Know that you are being formed by The Master Potter who loves and cares for His clay! Rudy

Prepare God gives us little trials in our lives so that we can learn to trust Him. I kept a budget slip from when we first got married 20+ years ago just to remind myself that we got by on less than \$800 a month, including our house payment. There were many times when I didn't know where the money needed to get by would come from. But in looking back, it is easy to see that God was taking care of everything. It is that hindsight that should give our faith the extra boost that it needs to get through tough times when they come. He is always with us, and His promise of everything working out for our good (Rom 8:28) doesn't stop when things get tough. It is there for our comfort and God will give us the faith to believe it!

Paul writes just a little latter in that Chapter these words, that have meant so much to so many, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom 8:38-39 Whatever we are facing, God will give us the strength to get through it AND use "it" to His glory. I know that this is true; from my little trials as God prepared me for life; from God's Word that tells me so; and from the Holy Spirit who convinces me it is so. May God's name be praised above all else and at the Name of Jesus may every knee bow!

May He who has a never-ending love for you, continue to strengthen you for this day and the next! Rudy

Charged Up Yesterday was a particularly hard day from the perspective that I had many different people want to get hold of me (or get a piece of me, depending on your point of view.) On days like that, I find that my cell phone battery goes dead before the end of the work day. Which means that I have to get out my cord that plugs into the power port of my truck to finish out my day. Of course there's all kinds of analogies. One would be that when we try to run our day without being plugged into the Source of strength, we are going to run out of energy. Or one might be that when you are feeling strung out, alone and afraid, plug your cord into God and let Him give you the boost of energy that you need. One more; That we really shouldn't run our day on battery power, we should stay connected directly to God, He even commands to "pray unceasingly."

But what I think I'll write about is just pure and honest power. Power maybe doesn't even come in second to sex when we think of how the world abuses and uses it. Power is just as intoxicating as liquor or drugs. Henry Kissinger called it "the great aphrodisiac." (New York Times, Jan 19, 1971) Henry Adams said in 1907, "The effect of power and publicity on all men is the aggravation of self, a sort of tumor that ends by killing the victim's sympathy." I myself remember one struggle with controlling power that sought to control me. It was when I bought a used Porsche. It was very difficult not to indulge in the power of that little machine. Right after I mastered it, I sold it, so I didn't have to master it all over again. One more quote, "No man is fit to be trusted with power... Any man who has lived at all knows the follies and wickedness he's capable of." (C.P. Snow, *The Light and the Dark*, 1961)

But just as I spoke in my devotion yesterday, there is no power greater than the Creator of all things. It is elegantly and simply put in Roman 8:31, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" The simple answer is 'No One!' We have the greatest power in the Universe on our side; in our corner. He is the One who knows your name; in fact, knows you better than you know yourself! And He simply has **MORE POWER** than anyone or anything else in the whole of creation. And He is your friend. Folks, it doesn't get any better than this. So, plug in and be recharged and then stay plugged in and never run low again!

May God grant you the power you need to get through this and every day! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Prescription There is always someone who wants to make rules that try to control you. I guess that is one reason why I don't like rules, and have always tried to see just how far they will bend. Man's rules -- not God's. God's rules have been given to us not for controlling us, but because he loves us and truly seeks what's best for us. In John 5 there's a little discussion between Jesus and the Jews. They are really ticked off because Jesus won't follow the "rules" about the Sabbath. So He gives them a long talking-to. In that discussion, Jesus gives us the clear prescription for eternal life. "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." John 5:24 We talked yesterday in class about being "for" or "against" Jesus. It really is very simple. 1 John 4:1 says, "Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God." Praise God that we do not have to follow a complicated set of rules to get to heaven. Praise God that he sent His only Son to be born in the flesh, to offer us eternal life. Unfortunately, while we are here on earth we still have to put up with man's set of rules. But, I am so glad that I have already "crossed over from death to life" and have begun my eternal life with Jesus. Praise His Holy Name!

May Jesus bless you today! Rudy

Springs of Life. It's a constant battle everyday to stay hydrated. I accepted the medical evidence that we all need to drink this enormous amount of water every day, and that it takes care of all kinds of problems, from lowering blood pressure to lessening the chance of a stroke. But if you are working out in the hot sun, especially in the dry Colorado air, you just get hot and thirsty. And even if I did remember to drink enough yesterday, I still have to do it all over again today. It was probably not much different in Jesus' day. Except they wore those long robes that had to be really hot. Well, (no pun intended) we all know the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman when He met her mid day at Jacob's well. Jesus says these wonderful words.

"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:13-14 The water that Jesus gives is, of course, much more important than earthly water, because its benefit is eternal life. But, I find it really interesting that once received, it turns us into a source. We become a "spring of water welling up." We are supposed to share that water that gives eternal life. And our spring will never run dry because we are connected directly to the source. We don't have to be selfish. We can supply as many as come to drink. So offer it up to all who thirst. Share Jesus with a parched world that desperately needs His love and hope and forgiveness.

May the true Source of all good things be and abide with you now and forever! Rudy

Leaving on a Jet Plane The anticipation of my younger children is about to drive me crazy. So it's really good that the day for us to leave on our vacation has finally arrived. It seems to me that the world of today is in such a hurry compared to the world that I spent my childhood years in. Many times it also seems that the only thing that we are hurrying up for is to wait. Wait in a line. Wait in a traffic jam. Wait for your food. Most of those waits aren't enjoyable. Mainly because there is somewhere else we need to be or another thing that we need to try and squeeze into the day. Well, there is one wait that should be enjoyable. "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord." Ps 27:14 Today, why don't you slow down and ask the Lord for a little patience. Then ask Him what you should be waiting on from Him. Now, if He doesn't answer you in 2.3 seconds, don't give up waiting. God doesn't run His world by the clock on our wrist. His only goal is to grow you and bring you closer to Him. So, we need to enjoy the wait and see the miraculous changes that God can produce over time. Well, gotta go; have to hurry up so we'll have time to relax! May the God who created time, give you plenty of it today! Rudy

Be it ever so humble! There are many beautiful things that God has created in this world. There is no doubt that I and my kids are better for seeing just the few things that this vacation has allowed us to experience. Without a little travel, one living in the mountains might never experience the vastness or shear power of the ocean. Without a little travel, one might never understand how really hot it gets in the South in the summertime. Or appreciate the cool crispness of the Colorado air. (Or for that matter, the freshness of it's water!) But, homecoming is always sweet. Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home.

Home and family are a fantastic gift from our Creator. "He daily and richly provides me with all that I need to support this body and life, food, clothes, house and home." Things do appear sweeter once we have gone without them for a while. But, how many of us pause and give thanks for the daily blessings that God gives and we might take for granted? Don't wait until their (there) gone to tell God how much you appreciate His good and gracious gifts. "You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. ... My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever." Psalm 145:16,21

Let your mouth ring out in praise to the Almighty Creator today! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Time for milk. Yesterday, in class, we dealt with some deep subjects, not the least of which being predestination. As I was trying to research more on Romans 9 this morning, I came across a nifty quote from Luther. When talking about Romans 9:16, he says, "For this is very strong wine and the most complete meal, solid food for those who are perfect, that is, the most excellent theology, ... But I am a baby who needs milk, not solid food. Let him who is like me do the same. The wounds of Jesus Christ, "the clefts of the rock" are sufficiently safe for us." (LW 25, p 389) So along with Luther I thought we should take a long drink of milk. As milk makes a child's bones strong, so the milk of the Gospel gives us a firm foundation upon which to grow.

The rock, of course, is Jesus Christ and the clefts, His wounds. Isaiah says, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." (53:5) This is milk in it's purest form. It is simple; we have been healed by the wounds that Jesus bore for us on the cross. Upon this simple fact the whole of Scripture must rest and must be interpreted from. Without this anchor, we are like boats blown about on seas of fury. Rest assured that Jesus died for you. He took all your sins, and paid the price. This is the Blessed Assurance that we walk into the hostile world with each day. AND this is the reference point that we base our reading of the totality of Scripture.

May the Lord strengthen you and give you peace! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

SubmissionHow do we get to the place where we really want God's will to happen in our life? I guess that everyone goes through the phase of life where he or she has to learn things on their own. No longer will what parents say stand just because they said it. It has to be tested. So, maybe you would agree that this rebellious stage is a part of life.

Something one must get through. A rite of passage. The problem is that some of us get stuck for a longer period than others. My guess is that I was stuck there for about 40 years. God has so many good things planned for us. Don't get me wrong, those good things still come during that rebellious period, but many times we are too angry to even see them, or to give God the Glory for them.

Luther translates Romans 9:21 this way, "Has the potter no right over the clay?" Now, just saying that in a class full of college students is enough to get oneself in trouble. It deals with this concept that this world and especially this culture finds so repulsive: Submission. Once we have been born again, our spiritual self is no longer dead, it can choose to cooperate (or not) with God (Rev 3:20). At this point, we begin this struggle between God's will and our own. At some point in time, each Christian should realize that the things that God wishes for our lives are ever so much better than the things that we want. When we realize that God' will is perfect we can begin to live the life that He wants for us. And hopefully stop questioning every little thing in our lives that doesn't sit well from our limited perspective.

Give God control over your life, even the little things. Go with His peace and blessing.Rudy

Blessed Assurance. The Bible is not vague about eternal life. The Bible does not give us uncertainty but in clear words states what it takes to get to heaven. And God wants every one of us there. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," (1 John 5:1) And again in verse 13, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." Is that clear enough for you? This is not something that God wants us to wonder about. This is the Rock on which we are to build are lives.

I have a tee shirt that in big letters has the words "Jesus is Life" across the chest, then a picture of a hand with a blood spot on it. Under the hand, it says in smaller letters, "The rest is just details." This is what I call an 'in your face shirt' because you can hardly miss it. But, sometimes I forget that I have it on. So, yesterday when I walked into the rental yard to pick up a sander and the helper there said "Hallelujah" I was perplexed, until he reminded me what shirt I had on. I wish that my life and actions would proclaim as boldly that Jesus Saves. But the fact is, He does. And we can be sure of it. We can build our life on it!

May the Blessed Assurance of the salvation stored up for you, be a comfort today! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Fireworks

It is strange when you think about it, that our freedom is represented by explosions. As a kid we were all taught that our national anthem was written during the night and that the bombs bursting in air allowed our flag to be seen; that it had not fallen and been replaced by another. I try to tell my kids when they get really angry over something that just flat doesn't matter, that there are some things worth fighting for. In their lifetime they have not experienced a real threat to our country from a foreign power. I am afraid that the real threat to our country now lies within our borders. Our country was founded on religious freedom, and in a little more than two hundred years Satan has been able to twist that concept. Now instead of it being "the government shall establish no religion" it is "the government shall make sure that there is no Christianity practiced in any public setting."

We are just like the frog who got put in the pan of water before it was hot. The temperature is going up and we don't even realize it. I hope that we wake up before the point of no return. "The authorities that exist have been established by God." Romans 13:1b There is no doubt that this country was founded by God. I just hope we haven't out lived our usefulness. This 4th, as you enjoy the "bombs bursting in air," say a prayer for our great country. Pray that it might continue and that it might stand for the beliefs that it was founded upon.

May peace and life and freedom, which have been given to us by our Great Creator, be with you on this holiday weekend. Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

HopeWhen the pressure comes (and it does come for all of us) we must not cave in. The only way our bodies can stand the pressure is by not relying on our own strength; it is never enough! We must yield to the strength of God. Listen to Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:7-8. "But we have this treasure in jars of clay (our bodies) to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." When I was in college, I remember thinking that once I was grown up and had a job that life would settle down. Then I could really live. I wouldn't have to deal with all these problems every day.

I still don't know quite when I realized that that's just the way life is. The problems; sickness, financial difficulties, personal disagreements; just happen. It is how we respond to them that's important. If we attempt to handle them ourselves with our own "jars of clay" we will fail sooner or later. The whole idea that Paul is expressing, is that our bodies are as fragile as jars of clay. They might endure a little tap, but whack them a good one and they fall to pieces. When we learn that every trial can better be handled with the strength that is found in Jesus then our bodies become like titanium. We maybe pushed around, but when the dust clears, we won't be broken. "Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold." (2 Cor 3:12)

Be Bold, Be Strong, for the Lord your God is with you! Rudy

Seeker Sensitive Are you seeker sensitive? It's a new church buzz word that means you are friendly to visitors that might come to your church, either looking for a new church home or looking for a relationship with Jesus (or both). I suppose you might ask me if its that big of a deal. Can't I just go to church, worship God, and go home? Isn't it the Minister's job? How 'bout those Elders, what do they get paid for? Well, the reason that it is your responsibility is twofold. First, the "flavor" of a church is made up by its members. When people walk in the door they can feel if a church is friendly, one that cares for the needs of people. One where Christ's Spirit is alive and active. But, I am almost thinking that the second reason is more important.

The world has this view of Christians as "goodie two shoes." Someplace where they aren't welcome if there is any sin in their lives. Let me share something with you: We all have sin in our lives. The church is for sinners. Listen to Paul; "He has made us ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Cor 3:6) We are to share the life that the Spirit gives. Who better to share that with a Seeker than YOU! Someone who has felt the power of the Spirit work in your life! Someone who has eternal Life through the blood of Jesus Christ! You are God's best ambassador. And a great place to practice it is on Sunday Morning a your church. Smile at somebody that you don't know. Stick your hand out to someone standing by themselves. Share the Love that Christ has given you. Praise God for His boundless love that, even though I was a sinner, yet He died for ME! Amen! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Runaway Horse When I first moved to Colorado I was 16 years old, and was able to get a job the very first summer as a camp counselor at this beautiful camp high in the Rockies. The camp had horses. Now, for some reason the people in charge just assumed I knew how to ride a horse. They gave me this beautiful black gelding named Denver. Luckily, before campers arrived, I got to take this beauty out for a spin. Up to this point in my life, I thought that the reins were just to steer with. I had never had a horse who would move faster than a slow trot, so I really didn't know one was supposed to use the reins to control forward movement also. Anyway, I got up on this horse, and the next thing I knew I was dodging branches that were coming at me faster than I thought possible. I remember returning to camp about fifteen minutes later. They must not have known what sheer terror looked like, because they assigned me that horse for the rest of the summer.

Sin is a lot like that horse. All I had to do was sit in the saddle and let up on the reins just a little and we would fly! If you give sin just a little leeway, it will carry you away. For some reason I have heard it said that fantasies are OK; just a little daydreaming. But, I believe if the fantasy is about something that you shouldn't be doing, it is just a dress rehearsal for the real thing. "But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." James 1:14-15 We must control our own thoughts. Because before an action happens it begins in thought. So just like one must control the reins of a horse, we must "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (2 Cor 10:5b)

May the Creator of all living things, nourish and bless you today! Rudy

Family Just yesterday, we installed our new Pastor at Holy Cross. It reminded me about how tied to each other we all are. If that Pastor were expected to do it all by himself, then the world would only be affected by one man. But, as a group of Christians motivated by that Pastor and each other we can reach to the very ends of the earth! I have found out about myself that I need other Christians around me. I need supportive minds and energetic interaction to make any progress. I need positive (or negative) feedback or I turn into a lump! And it's amazing how quick that lump can take over. Next thing you know, I'd be a couch potato willing to let the world go by while I watched my soaps. Psalm 139 is a wonderfully encouraging Psalm, talking about how God knows our "inmost being"; it says He "knit me together." It talks about how precious each person is to God. In verse 16, it says: "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." God is interested in each moment that we have to live here on this earth. Are we using them wisely? Are we caring for others? Are we growing in God's word? Are we trying to reach unsaved souls with the good news of Jesus' love? Or are we turning into a lump? Jesus says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock." Are we willing to open the door, or is our butt molded to the recliner? Time to rise and shine! Rudy

Nothing New I like collecting old books. Sometimes you might get just one book out of a dozen bought at auction that makes it worthwhile. "The Devil of To-Day," copyright 1906, is one that gives some interesting insight. It is an allegory, so the author tries to do the same thing that C. S. Lewis accomplished in the "Screwtape Letters." On Page 293 we find 'Faultfinder' writing to his boss. *To His Satanic Majesty, Greeting: I have been stirring up trouble in the home lives of men and women, and have succeeded, during the last year, in having four thousand six hundred and sixty-nine divorces granted in one state alone. It strikes me that this is a matter worthy of your most serious thought. If we can break up homes at this rate, we are doing a great deal to retrieve our losses in other directions. Your faithful servant, Faultfinder*

It would seem to me that if a coach never came up with new plays that the competition would figure him out and start winning. Or if a general went into battle with Civil War Era tactics, that he would lose. Yet, we let Satan pull all the same tricks and we still succumb to them. Now I know he has the Internet, but lust is as old as hills. Do we think it is smart to let young boys, (or males of any age) watch scantily clad women on TV? Why don't we see Satan's hand in pornography? Why don't we call these things exactly what they are instead of hiding behind 'free speech'? It's not free speech! It's giving Satan control of the minds of our young people. Notice I said 'giving'? We're not even putting up a fight. It actually may be sitting right in our houses. Or as close as the remote control.

Guys, we are in a battle. I don't want to say we're losing, because God is in charge and is our great God. But, will it be for us like it was for Sodom? "The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it." Gen 19:13 We live in a great country. But, let us remember what made it great and not forsake the right to fight for the hearts and minds of our young people.

May the blessing of our Great God stay with you and our Country. Rudy

Mountains Did you know that only 5% of the earth is covered in mountains? I feel fortunate to be able to look out of my window and get a glimpse of the awesome creation of God. "I lift my eyes to the hills -- where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1 A few years ago when my oldest ventured off to camp for the very first time, I was very afraid for his safety. You see, I was a camp counselor for 8 summers, and I knew the kind of things that could happen. It wasn't until I got the concept that the only safety that my kids have comes from God, no matter where they are, that I began to let go a little.

Today, my number 2 and 3 sons, Zachary and Aaron left on a mission trip for downtown LA. Of course, I still have some of the same parental fears. But it helps for me to look to the mountains and realize that the very same God that made those mountains knows my boys better than I do. In fact, He loves them more than I do, because He loves them with a perfect love. I let my boys go, knowing that the Lord is in charge of their lives, and He can grow them and protect them ever so much more than I can. I pray for their safety and the safety of the whole group. Now I have to let go and let God take care of them.

Praise be to the God who made the mountains! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
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And your drawings:

Once Saved? We been talking a lot in class lately about some tough subjects. When predestination comes up, it almost always brings up 'once saved, always saved (OSAS).' This is not one of those biggies that I will argue with someone who's on the other side of the fence, but I have my own understanding and of course I'm going to share that with you this morning. So, if you're firmly in the once saved, always saved camp, don't bother with the rest of this devo. It takes the love of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit to bring about regeneration of our dead spirits. But, once that spirit within us is alive again, we can participate with Jesus in His work. At that time I believe that we can also reject Him. I certainly agree with the verses that nothing can separate us from God's Love. Nothing outside of ourselves. I believe it is within our power to separate ourselves by rejection. One verse that states this clearly is John 3:36. "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." So, we need to live in the comfort of knowing that our salvation is sure. But, don't take it for granted. Keep working on it with fear and trembling!

May the God of the Universe who called you by name, be and abide with you now and forever! Rudy

Mornings"In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation." Psalm 5:3 I know not everyone in the world is a morning person, but I really like mornings. My head is clearer, the air is crisp; it seems that I can talk to God easier in the morning. Many times a line from an old song comes to mind: "Welcome to my morning, welcome to my day, clear blue sky and brightly shining sun." Today, instead of heavy theology or fear of where the world is going, I just wanted to praise and thank God for each morning and new day that He gives us.

We can so easily get all wrapped around the axle about all the bad things in the world that sometimes they might start getting more attention than the good and wonderful things in the world. "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things." Philippians 4:8 We have a little dinner tradition of each person saying something that happened good to us during the day. Many times it can brighten the mood at the table and turn our focus from our everyday hurts and pains to the better, admirable things of the day.

So today; whether it's in the morning or the evening, take a walk and smell a flower then praise God for all the good things that He has given us!Rudy

Billy Goat Some of you know Jordie, my Billy Goat. I bought him for the VBS petting zoo last year along with two sheep. I was trying to get animals that appeared in the Bible and of course the sheep and the goats are famous for getting separated at the end of time. "When the Son of Man comes ... All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." Mat 25:31-32. Now not being steeped in the ways of shepherdom, I didn't know why a shepherd separated the sheep from the goats. I'll bet you that one of you knows some reasons.

But, I did find some insight in Ezekiel chapter 34 where God is saying that He will be the shepherd for His people. "Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away." Verse 21 Now I must admit when it comes time to eat that Jordie uses his horns in a rather aggressive way. Could it be that God really means all that about taking care of the widows and orphans? Could it be that we are supposed to use our strength to help the helpless and defenseless of this world? Maybe that is the difference between the sheep and the goats. After we have been born again through the love of Jesus, we live a different life than what our human nature would be without the love of Jesus. What James means when he says "faith without deeds is dead," is that if we have the faith that comes from God we cannot help but do the deeds that He commands. It is like the heat rising from an electric burner. When you apply faith (electricity) you cannot help but have deeds (heat). Let's all use our horns today to help someone who needs them instead of helping ourselves to just get more. May the God who provides for the widow and the orphan use you today in His work! Rudy

Noah Motivation Around here everyone heads to the hills on the weekends. That means that a large percentage of the people that live in Colorado Springs drive right by my house up Highway 24 which is the only route into (or out of) the mountains. They usually take most of Friday afternoon and all day Saturday to get 'up the pass.' Now sometimes, especially when it rains on Sunday afternoon, all those people that took two days to get up the pass try to go down the pass at the same time. That's where we found ourselves yesterday afternoon. As adults, we have learned -- kind of -- to be patient in traffic jams. But my four year old Noah is a little short on patience. He started trying to motivate me to go faster. First it was just 'hurry up, Dad.' Then it escalated to, 'I have to go potty.' Each time he got a little more creative -- and threatening.

I know that when God doesn't act when we think He should we do the same thing as Noah was trying to do to me. First, we ask really hard. Then we may try to 'make a deal' with God. And I know at least a few times in my life I've tried to threaten God to get Him to act sooner. James tells us: "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." James 5:16 So when we pray we should first confess our sins. Then through the righteousness of Jesus Christ we can approach the Almighty Father with our requests. Rest assured that God hears and answers those prayers. And God's timing is always perfect!

May you be in constant contact with the Almighty Creator of the Universe! Rudy

Attitude is Everything Have you ever gotten into trouble for just the wrong inflection in your voice? So someone who knew you well could tell that you were upset when you shouldn't have been? My number four son, Jeremiah, shares this particular trait with me. Neither of us hide our anger or frustration very well. So when he gets in a mood I tell him that 'Attitude is Everything.' Meaning that if his attitude isn't right, whatever he does is done from the wrong motivation. Many times a person can get by with the wrong motivation with other people and they won't catch on. But, it doesn't work with God. God knows the heart and He cares about motivation.

In Numbers 20:11 Moses and all the Children of Israel are without water. God tells Moses, "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water." Nu 20:8 Then what Moses really does is recorded in verse 11: "Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out." It was for this sin that Moses was not allowed into the Promised Land. Now I ask you, was this a big deal? So what if he hit the rock instead of speaking to it? There are several problems, like now the people will think Moses did it instead of God doing it and so on. But, I think the biggest problem with the situation was Moses' attitude. And God knew exactly what Moses' attitude was. So, everyone out there for all the times my attitude wasn't the way it should be, would you please forgive me? Thanks, I knew you would. So, the next time you're having a bad attitude, remember that it does matter to God!

May the Almighty God bless your attitude today. RudyPS Thanks for all who prayed for parts! The truck was actually done a whole day early, and we are back home! (Maybe I ought to ask you to pray for better gas mileage? Naw -- that's OK.)

WeaversMy lovely wife, Dena, has recently taken up weaving. She uses a special thread in one of her patterns that is called chenille (?) that is very soft. The resulting weave is quite extraordinary in its richness and softness. I realized recently that we are all weavers of a kind. Each of us weave our lives and the lives of those that touch us. This continues each and every day of our lives. Our threads aren't cotton or wool, rather they are the thoughts and emotions with which we interact with other people. For instance, I believe that love produces a very fine and soft weave. On the other hand, anger produces a weave full of holes and a rough texture. It might even fall apart.

"And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Colossians 3:14 If we mind the threads that we are weaving our lives and families with, the overall fabric will be smooth and durable. If we weave with bad threads, then the fabric will not stand up when it is stretched by the storms of this world. So just as a weaver creates a fabric one strand at a time, we are building our lives one moment at a time. What we weave into it will determine its strength and character. Perfect love only comes from God. With His love we can attempt to build a life that won't frazzle at the edges. So the next time you have a choice of whether to use anger or love to weave your next moment, think of the whole tapestry of your life and choose the lasting thread.

May the peace of the Master Weaver, our own Jesus Christ, be with you today. Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Evangelical Endurance My very nice doctor friend said that if my back was ever going to get better than I had to exercise. I told him that I couldn't do even one sit up. So he gave me the pep talk about starting slow and working up. Well, it took me a week but I was able to do 5 sit ups. Now after increasing it just five a week, I'm up to 35. But, I've got to do them everyday or I loose it quickly. Each week, as I add 5 new ones, they are always tough. But by the end of the week I'm ready for five more. Amazing, Right?

My boys came back from their Mission Trip to downtown LA all excited about their ability to walk up to a street person, and in a matter of minutes be able to be talking about Jesus. I am very glad that they have had the experience of sharing their faith. How many of us could do the same? I'll bet some of you could, just like some of you laugh at my measly 35 sit ups. But, I'll bet some of you are like me. Not real comfortable with cold calls about Jesus. I think sharing the gospel is an ability that, just like sit ups, gets easier with practice. Only how many of us don't get any practice at all? Maybe our next new Bible study should be downtown in our own town with a little sharing after wards? Maybe a thermos of coffee or a bag of PBJ sandwiches would be better tools than a cold stare or a blind shoulder? I know I need practice.

And endurance! How about you?

Share God's love and peace today. Rudy

Background Prayer Have you ever woken up during the night and had a song going through your head? I really enjoy when that happens to me when it's a favorite hymn or praise song. I think that that is my spirit praising God even when I sleep. But, I have noticed that this is another one of those 'garbage in, garbage out' situations. If I've been listening to oldies on the radio it is not usually a good song going through my head at night, rather a song talking about things that we know we shouldn't do. Please don't be offended, but I really wonder what those country music listeners think about.

So anyway, maybe at least try to listen to good stuff before you go to bed, then maybe you can "pray continually" like we are told to do in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. I have found that if you can have this background prayer going on even during the day it helps deal with the problems that come up in this less than perfect world. It even helps deal with our less than perfect selves. By the way, the one that's been going on for me lately is a song by the late Rich Mullins, "Oh God, You are my God" It's got great lyrics, like "I will seek You in the morning, I will learn to walk in Your ways; And step by step You'll lead me, and I will follow You all of my days."

I hope your day goes well, and May God Bless you in all of your ways! Rudy

TimeI think that most of you probably know that I believe that God created time as a dimension for us to live in. Now of course, that's not doctrine to live by, but it does provide some unique perspectives, depending upon your vantage point. For some reason I remember walking out of school on the last day of 1st grade and thinking that summer would be as long as the rest of my life. Now, summers seem to fly by. I also remember being a college student and feeling that there was more than enough time to accomplish great things with my life. Now 20 years after college, there are sometimes that I feel that time is no longer my friend.

But since God created time, it must be basically good. Satan tries to twist everything that God has made. He makes us anxious about not having enough time in our day by filling our day with meaningless junk. Like TV shows we don't really even like, but we sit like a lump watching them anyway. But, I like to think of time as a friend. There's always going to be time for God's work if we can sort through all the crap that Satan tries to trip us up with. "Be very careful, then, how you live -- not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." (Eph 5:15) But, also remember that "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heaven." (Ecc 3:1) So like the wise virgins, make the most of your time, for the Lord is coming.

Praise the God of heaven who created a time for everything!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

God has perfect timing! I want to tell you a story about last Wednesday night. There's a number of details that you need to understand so you'll get the full effect of God's awesome timing. (But you can skip to the last para and get the point.) Most of you know that I not particularly good at night, I love mornings and by supper time I'm ready to quite. Unfortunately, the world doesn't always work on my schedule. So about 4pm last Wed my son calls me at the worksite saying that my Mother-in-law (we call her Grossmama) really needed to talk to my wife. So I try Dena on her cell phone and it's obvious by the way it rings that the battery was dead. So now I have to go into fast mode. I leave the job site and call Grossmama and find out that the pain in her back that we had heard about earlier in the day has now reached critical proportions.

So, I run over and take her to the Emergency Room. But I still have two scheduled meetings at church, so finally about 6 I hand her off to my wife (who called us) and head to church. I put my three little ones in the nursery and send my three big boys off to a concert at church and attend my meetings. Meanwhile, (and this is an important point) MY cell phone battery goes dead. So I keep running out of my meeting to make calls to my Mom (we call her Granny) to check if my wife has called from the hospital. No news. Finally about 8:30 my meeting is over enough that I can leave, so I pick up my three little ones, check with my older ones (the concert is still going on) and head to Granny's to drop the kids and go back to the hospital. Now it starts to rain. Not just a little. Water is flowing across the hospital parking lot at least 6 inches deep.

We have all had days like this, right? Satan is trying to get to you when you're the weakest with a bunch of straws heaped up on your back. Well, I go into the ER and find the reason that Dena hasn't called is that they still don't know anything and the last three pain shots haven't helped at all. As I walk in they are giving her morphine to try to control the pain. In a brief discussion with my wife we decided to stop the older boys from going home from church (it's about a 30 minute drive up a mountain pass) so I use the hospital phone to call the church to try to stop them from heading home. Patra, our dear Youth director answers the phone and says that they have already left. In her wonderful sensitivity, she realizes that I'm beginning to get stressed so she prays with me right there on the phone. Then I try home, but no answer. So I pray some more. I still need to call my Sister-in-law that lives in Omaha, but since that's a long distance call I have to go back out into the rain to my truck where I have plugged in my cell phone into the lighter in the truck.

As I walk through the rain with the water coming over my boots I keep praying for my boys and the driving abilities of Zachary in this terrible rain. Here it comes. A direct sign from God. I open my truck door and pick up my phone to call Omaha and the phone rings. And yes it was Zachary and they were home safe. There was maybe a three-second window that I would have received that call. Since my phone was in the truck, and not on my belt where it was supposed to be. God had to time it perfectly. And He did. It sent me a message that God had everything well in hand and that I just needed to concentrate on what I was supposed to be doing and let Him take care of the rest. God is so good! The writer of Hebrews assures us of this when he writes, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. So we say with confidence, The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" Heb 13:5-6 Indeed, God has perfect timing and He is there for you and me. And you know what?, His cell phone battery never goes dead. Takes your cares to the mercy seat of Jesus. He loves you soooo much! Rudy

Flaming Darts and Stress"In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." Eph 6:16 I'm not sure if there was a word for stress back in Paul's day, I'm sure some Greek scholar could fill us in. But, I am sure that there is nothing new under the sun. Satan has been using the same old tricks since day one. So I am sure that Paul experienced stress, even if he didn't call it stress. As I ponder my week last week, I realized that the only time that the classic effects of stress were affecting my mood and actions were the times that I didn't have faith enough to trust God with the outcome. We all battle with the flaming darts that Satan and his little demons throw at us every day. Paul tells us that our faith will act as a shield between us and those darts. In a battle in Paul's time the shield was one of the most important pieces of defensive armor. If your shield is doing it's job, the arrows don't even reach your body. In fact, in battle if even one arrow slipped passed, it might have meant death. So, I ask you, why don't we hold up our shield??? Why do we continue to let Satan have his little victories with arrows poking out of us like a pin cushion? I know stress is the number one problem with our society today. And I think that many Christians leave their faith at home when they head out into the "real world." It's like leaving all your armor at home when you go out to fight a battle. The "real world" is our battle ground. The battle is for the hearts and minds of the unbelievers. And we are letting Satan win the day because we show up unprepared for battle. So today, arm yourselves with the shield of faith by praying, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief."
Go forth and do battle for the Lord of Hosts! May He bless you greatly!Rudy

Wake Up Call Several people have written me lately and referred to these little devotions as wake up calls. I guess I like that. I hope as a result of reading these wake up calls, that we, myself included, will wake up and realize that our life is passing before us. There is no doubt in my mind that sometimes God says wait when we ask for direction. But, much more often I think that God is saying 'get on with it' and we're the ones saying 'wait.' The corporate church is especially guilty of this. Of course, it comes in the form of a "committee" or a "special task force," which sometimes we need; but all too often is used as a form of control by those who don't want anyone else getting things done.

We've just talked about the body of Christ in class last Sunday as Paul presents it in 1 Cor 12 and following. "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!'" (12:21) We all need each other. And we all need to get off our sanctimonious collective butts and get busy with the work God has equipped us to do. Sure He has given us skills to be able to earn a living, but the living is not the end. The living allows us to serve. And Minister. "Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." Eph 5:15-16 Every one of us has a ministry. And it relies on the body of Christ to be successful. But I don't think God is saying 'wait,' I think He is saying, 'if not now, when?'

Lord, help each one of us understand what your will for our ministry is, and then, Lord, give us the motivation to do it!
Amen!Rudy

Open JeepIt's time just to Praise God for a little bit. Zachary (my 16 year old) has been working this summer and he plans to sell his horse to come up with a little more refined method of transportation, so we've been watching the paper for a good deal on an older jeep; which we found last week. Since Zachary still has to pay for it, I got to drive it a little, and chose to drop the top and head up to Lutheran Valley Retreat on Monday -- the long way. I know the song says that Seattle has the bluest skis, but on Monday, the Colorado high country could have been in the competition. And, of course, without the top on you can look straight up at the dark green of the pines contrasted against that dark blue. God is some amazing artist!

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge." Ps 19:1&2 The psalmist goes on to say that there is no place on earth that voice of the heavens and skies does not reach. Every where on earth, every day and night they Praise our Almighty God for creating them and making them new each day. So take a moment (or several) and walk outside and look up at the sky. Day or night it is singing Praise to God. Join in. Tell God what a good artist you think He is and thank Him for His latest masterpiece.

Give Glory and Praise to the Maker of all!Rudy

Hummocks Yesterday, as I tried to keep up with two of my boys, I found myself surrounded by hummocks. We were at 11,500 feet above sea level at a beautiful lake on the side of Mt. Yale. Below this lake were a number of beaver ponds. The boys promised that the fishing was better in the ponds than the main lake; so here we are trying to negotiate this marshy wetland area between the ponds. Each little hummock was about a foot square with water surrounding them. So, I had to determine which ones would hold my weight then step onto it. They were far enough apart, however, that before you could test it to see if it could hold you, you had to leave the last one that you'd been standing on. Needless to say, sometimes I mis-judged and sank up to my ankle in the marsh.

Even as I was walking on these hummocks, I couldn't help but draw an analogy in my mind with taking steps in the real world. We do all our advanced planning; look the situation over in great detail, but there still comes the time that you just have to step out in faith. To live any other way, is to be stuck on the top of one hummock for your whole life; going nowhere; risking nothing; and regretting it at the same time. But we as Christians have a gracious and forgiving God. He gives us His Word as a light to guide our paths (Ps 119:105). And He gives us strength. "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." 2 Tim 1:7 And He gives us grace, for the times that we miscalculate and come back with wet feet. So, 'Be bold! Be Strong! For the Lord your God is with You!' May He guide your dance among the hummocks of life today! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

Lined area for writing thoughts, consisting of 20 horizontal lines.

And your drawings:

A Mother's Tears Now I've really come full circle in these devotions. I started them when Jason, our oldest son went away for his first year of college. We have just said good bye to him, and he has driven off to start his second year. I wonder if it will ever get any easier to say good bye? I think God made a parent's heart both tough as nails and soft as an over ripe tomato. Right now I'm on the tomato side. God is such a good God. The Psalmist captures my feeling when he says: "You have filled me heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound." (Ps 4:7) What greater gift could God give than children who love the Lord? At the same time my heart is sad at the good-byes but soaring with what God has in store for my Jason.

Dear Lord, protect Jason and all who return to school. Protect them as they drive or fly or ride the train. Keep their hearts safe, Lord, from all the threats of the evil one; and open their hearts to you, Lord, so they might grow and become the awesome workers in your Kingdom and follow the paths that you have prepared for them. And for all the parents, Lord, please guard our hearts and keep them from breaking; rather fill us with the assurance of your protection and guidance for our precious gifts, that you have but loaned us for a short while. In the most Holy name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Peace be with you all. Rudy

Back with it! I have my computer back up and running. It was the most amazing thing. The computer techies actually showed me where the lightning had melted the main chip on my modem card. It evidently came in through the telephone lines instead of the power lines. So now I have a surge protector that has both power and phone lines running through it. It's kind of like all the nasty things in this world. Just when you think you are adequately protected, it slips in another way and bites you in the behind before you knew it was there. "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith." 1 Peter 5:8 Just like the lightning strike that burned up my modem card, Satan isn't going to warn you before he strikes. It's important that the protection be in place when the attack comes. I've talked a lot about faith lately, but it is amazing how powerful that one little word is. It can extinguish the darts of the evil one. Like a fire department and a suit of armor all rolled up into one. So take your faith along with you. Use it like an advance warning and protection system. And be ready for the attacks to come from a different direction. Then maybe they won't catch you by surprise. Stand firm! It is the best defense! Rudy

Dirty Corners Last night I had the distinct honor of replacing our dishwasher. It is not something I would choose to do as a living. But, what most appalled me was what was under the old dishwasher. I've thought about actually describing what had collected under there, but I think most of you would not appreciate the narrative. I was truly disgusted with the stuff I had to clean out before I could install the new one. So here's the tie. How many of us would be willing and proud of the contents, if we were to give a tour of the darker corners of our heart. Jesus says, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man (or woman) unclean." Matt 15:19

What you actually do starts in the heart. It is there, Jesus says, that all those evil things begin. Is it time to check the corners of your heart to see what's lurking there and maybe do a little heart cleaning? If all the corners have been scrubbed clean there is no place for all those evil things to take root. So, you ask, how does one go about cleaning a heart? I think you spend a quiet time with you and your personal Savior and examine all the things that have built up over the years. Maybe even some things that have been drug in by others. And you lay them all before the mercy seat of God. Then you ask Him to do the final sweep. Finally, give it all a coat of love and, presto, a clean heart. Try it and let me know how it goes.

May the love of Christ, fill your heart to overflowing! Rudy

Zero Control Several people have been wanting me to tell this story, but it's taken just a little time and distance for me to be able to tell it. But, I think I'm ready, and it's a Saturday so I can use a few more words, so here is the story about my arrest. Several years ago, I got a non moving violation ticket for having expired plates on my car. So I went to court, and found out I needed one more piece of paper, so instead of just paying the fine I thought I would reschedule the court date and get the right piece of paper. But they set the court date two months out. Well, I spaced it. Didn't even give it another thought until last week. I had gotten a background check done, and they sent me a letter saying there was an outstanding warrant that I needed to take care of.

So here I go, prancing into the courthouse. I sat down at this nice young lady's desk and said I wanted to take care of this and showed her the letter. After she pulls up the case number on the screen, she starts making calls; and I get this sinking feeling. She says that I can't just pay; that I have to be taken into custody. And as if on cue, two deputies show up behind me and ask me to stand up. As they were placing the handcuffs on my wrists, I realized my day wasn't going to go as I had planned. I also realized at that point that the "system" is rather inflexible. Next I get moved up to their processing center, searched, photographed and checked for priors. And because of some clerks misspelling, I now have an alias, also. So they have to check my alias for priors. Finally I get to make my one phone call. Explaining this to my wife is a whole other story. But, I got her on the way with bail money.

Next, I get to go to the holding cell and sit. And sit. And sit. I never have liked prison. Maybe it is the loss of control. Maybe it's the finality of that bang when they close that big metal door. Anyway, I got to think about all those things. I was lucky. Dena was home when I called. She had cash. She drove right to the courthouse and posted my bond. And then we had lunch together. What if, she had said to me on the phone, "Oh well, honey I really have to go shopping first. There this sale that I just can't miss." Or, "Gee honey, that money is set aside to finish our house, I really couldn't use it for bail." Of course she wouldn't say those things. But how often do we make excuses when it's time for us to bail someone out of the sin that binds them as tight as any jail cell.

"I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness: ... to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness." Isaiah 42:6,7 You see, the Lord has already paid the price for the release of those enslaved in the darkness of sin. But He has asked us to deliver it. He has given us the responsibility of spreading the good news of salvation through faith in Him. How often are we too busy to take that news of release to the captives? How long shall we leave them sitting in darkness? It is a most important job. One we do because we love the lost, because Jesus showed us that love when we were lost. How can we not do the same??? May the Lord of heaven and earth guide you today! Rudy

Filled Up What are you filled up with? Sometimes it's supper. Sometimes for me it's anger. Sometimes it's urgency, to get the job at hand done. Many times these things make me a little single minded. When I'm full of supper, I just want to take a nap. When I'm full of anger, then it's just getting my piece said, no matter what anyone else has to say. And of course, if I have the urgency for the job at hand, you had better not ask me to concentrate on anything else. Many of the things that we get filled up with each day do not leave any room for other people. It becomes a rather selfish "me" kind of existence. "My" quiet time. "My" view on a situation. "My" job takes precedence over any that you have to get done. I do not believe that we are called into this world to be selfish. Sure, as a baby we are the most selfish creatures in the world. Everything revolves around a baby. But as we mature in our relationship with Christ we are called to grow out of the selfish mode. Paul says in Ephesians 5:18, "Instead, be filled with the Spirit." When we are filled with the Spirit of the Living God, He helps us turn towards relationships instead of selfishness. "Sing to one another." Verse 19 "Submit to one another." Verse 21 "Husbands, love your wives." Verse 25 "Children, obey your parents." 6:1 Once we fill up with the Spirit our world turns outward away from ourselves and we serve God by serving and loving our fellow man. This is exactly opposite of the kind of thinking the world hands to us. And exactly opposite of my tendency each and every day. So, start the morning each day by asking God to fill you up with the Holy Spirit. Then maybe there won't be room for all those other things when they want to come in.

Thanks be to God who sends His Spirit to us each day! Rudy

WeedsIn German my last name (Bauer) means farmer. But I probably need to know the German word for frustrated because it should be my middle name. I just have a little patch of wheat that I have tried to grow. I read the books on how to keep it weed free without using any chemicals, but I must have weeds that are more persistent than your average weed. About 30 percent of my wheat patch has other kinds of stuff growing than the pure wheat that I planted. I am about ready to harvest, so when I do I'll give you the percentage increase over the seed that was sown. But my guess is that the weeds that have grown up along with my wheat have greatly reduced my production of my little 3/10th of an acre garden.

So my analogy is that the weeds that we allow to grow along with us in life can greatly effect our own productivity. We can choose to surround ourselves with good influences or we can choose to fill our lives with filth. The myth that many people carry around is that what they do with their private time doesn't matter. But what you put into your mind effects your whole self; your whole outlook on life. Jesus puts it this way: "Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body is also full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness." Luke 11:34&35 This is an age where anyone that wants to can have all the darkness they want to put inside them. It is easily accessible to almost any one of any age. So, only through self discipline can we keep out the darkness. It has to be a premeditated choice on our part to exclude that darkness from our lives. So -- make a good choice!

May the God who created all things good, keep your heart and mind pure!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

RevealedIn the middle of the night, when one of my younger children has a bad dream or maybe an upset stomach, or as last night just pre first day school jitters, they come looking for their "Daddy." No slam against Mom, they have just learned through experience that I wake up easier than Mom does. And, of course, like a Daddy should, I try to give them the comfort they need. Usually, I am successful. Sometimes, I have to hold them on my lap for a while until the fears subside. Through our relationship with Jesus we have the same kind of access to our Heavenly "Daddy."

When Jesus prays for His disciples in John 17:6, He says to His Father, "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world." Then in verse 20 He expands His prayer to all believers. "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you." By seeing Jesus, the disciples were able to see the Father. We likewise by believing in Jesus and committing to a personal relationship with Him, have been given that same intimate access to the Father. Any time day or night, when the fears of the world threaten to overwhelm us, we can call out, "Daddy." What an awesome gift! What a tremendous privilege! Thanks be to Jesus for our Divine Connections.

May our Father be with you now and forevermore!**Rudy**

A Quiet Place Let me tell you where there is not a quiet place to be found. My house on the first day of school. I've been used to being the only person up at this time, and having quiet concentration for my writing time. Well, this morning as all my kids head back to school, this place is buzzing. And, of course, no one can make any decision for themselves. And also, of course, I forgot to buy lunch bags for the kids to pack their lunches. I wonder what kids used before they made paper bags? Many times we let the hecticness of life intrude upon our quiet time. The time we've set aside to be with the Lord. It's a mistake. I've heard a quote from Luther that went something like this: 'I've so much to do today, I'd better pray at least 3 hours.' How many of us have a direct link in our minds between what we have to accomplish today and the amount of prayer time we give to it?

Many times we see Jesus taking the time for prayer. After He feeds the five thousand, we are told, "After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray." Mat 14:23 After this prayer time Jesus walks on water! We are even commanded to come to Jesus. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matt 11:28-30 So when you think things are a little to hectic, take the time to spend alone with Jesus in a quiet place. He will refresh you and give you strength for the day. It's a promise. And it works!

May the Lord bless you and give you peace! Rudy

Growth God has blest me in ways that I never expected. One is to be able to walk my 9 year old daughter to school each morning. We started that little tradition again yesterday, as school began for another season. The one thing I noticed is that just over the summer her hand has grown. It's funny how I could notice that just by holding her hand. Many times people ask me where my boys have gotten their height from, since they are several inches taller than I am. I tell them it's just good genes and good food. Any way about it, all my children are growing up and it's very pleasing as a parent to see such healthy growth.

God wants His children to grow also. Not in the physical sense but, in the spiritual sense. In 1 Peter 2:2 we are told, "Like newborn babies, crave spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." Wouldn't it be neat to have God feel the growth in your hand each time you reach out for Him. The genetics for spiritual growth were grafted onto us at our baptism. The good food for our growth is the Word. And we at this time in our society's development have more versions and translations than any other society has ever had. So, develop a craving for the Word of God so that you, indeed might grow up into all that God wants you to be! May you be fed well today, and may God bless your growth! Rudy

The Bread"Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes will never be thirsty. ... For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.'" John 6:35 & 40 Many years ago, I worked with an unbeliever who said that Jesus never actually said that He was the Son of God. This coworker was hiding behind this statement, supposedly told to him by a Nun, so that he could simply dismiss all people who tried to talk with him about Jesus. And he dismissed me in the same way. Of course, he also used it as an excuse not to read the Bible and check it out for himself. Within a couple of days we had the opportunity to talk about this whole subject again, and I was ready for him. I had written down a number of verses, even clearer than the one above, where Jesus declares that He is the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

I would love to say that our discussions led to the conversion of my coworker, but this guy had a ways to go. I can only hope that the seed planted would continue to grow, and the one lie that he had used to keep himself distanced from Jesus had been dispelled. But we as believers many times do the same thing. We hear something or even remember something from our childhood and never check it out for ourselves. We have some of the best scholarship available ever on the Word of God. We can read Greek word studies without having to learn Greek. We can study the Bible as no generation has ever been able to do in the past. So do it! Read, learn and inwardly digest it. It gives witness to the Bread of Life, that has come down from heaven in the flesh to be our own Savior! Folks, it doesn't get any better. May the Author of the Word instill in you a desire to know Him better! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Struggle Everyone seems to like it when I write about Noah. I think it's because we can all relate with the way that he is feeling, and when he's angry he says it so cute. For those who have just joined us, Noah is my 6th child (out of seven). He is four years old. And I am positive that God gave me all my other children to teach me how to deal with Noah. Lately, he has decided to throw a temper tantrum every time we get in the car. His strength of will far exceeds both that of my wife and mine. It is only because we are older and more experienced that we still retain the upper hand (most of the time). The other day in the car his stance was, "I want the children to be in charge!" Of course this is at the top of his lungs and repeated so many times that it almost became a litany. This is still on the popular theme of Noah's that he is in charge of his life and not his mother and I.

I believe that this is so like our relationship with God. Maybe we have the maturity of a four year old, and we are yelling at God that we want to be in charge of the way things get done down here on earth. And we aren't willing to give in. We say it over and over. Still God won't let us out of the car on our own in a strange town (what Noah wanted) and we wonder why. We cannot accept that the Heavenly Father knows best. Somehow David (as in King David) was able to accept the Lord's leadership in his life at an early age. His story of beating Goliath is such a fun one for kids, but we too, need to learn it was only because David relied totally on the Lord for his direction and strength that he was successful. After God keeps David safe from Saul, David writes: "As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. For who is God beside the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God?" Ps 18:30-31 So the next time we catch ourselves yelling that "We want to be in charge!", think of a loving Heavenly Father and all the good He wants for us.

May the God of the Universe, who knows and loves YOU, guide your steps today! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Crouching "Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.'" Gen 4:6,7 Now an old dude like myself has probably experienced every kind of sin crouching at my door that there is to experience. But I bet that for some of you, that there maybe a few new ones that you haven't had to wrestle with before. I've been wrestling long enough that I now recognize when sin is sitting there trying to get me. I have found it is a matter of personal choice. Cain chose poorly. It is only through the help of a Promise Keepers Accountability Partner that I have been able to "master it" as God directs us to.

But I fear for you young people. Satan has been around a very long time and has a number of tricks up his sleeve. You must always be on your guard, for some of them may sneak up on you. I know this: he always attacks when you are at your weakest. Usually when you are relying on yourself, not on God's strength. If you give him an inch, he'll take a mile. Sin is ugly to God. Yes, we are saved by Grace, but sin drives a wedge between us and God. Each one of you should seriously think about getting an accountability partner of the same sex, who you can be totally honest with. When we have to "publicly" confess our sins to that person and you know he/she is going to ask if you've been good, it provides an extra motivation to "master" sin before it gets you. We have God's promise that nothing will ever come against us that we cannot master with His help. So it becomes a matter of choice. Your choice. Keep your guard up! May the power of the Most High be with you today! Rudy

Addresses! I am not complaining, mind you, but with the Air Force Academy changing it's whole E-mail address structure and the new names I've been getting to add to my list, keeping this E-mail address list accurate has been a challenge. So, if you hear that someone isn't getting these morning devos that should be, let me know. Or, if you would like me to add someone, just let me know their name and E-mail address. As I was making the changes this morning, I couldn't help but appreciate the direct communication that we have with God. He knows our name. I suppose that He also knows our address and E-mail and telephone number and number of hairs on our head, but He doesn't need them to communicate with us. And we don't have to have any fancy gadgets to call upon his name either.

As I was reading John, this morning these words jumped out at me. "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life." John 7:63 Through God's Spirit we have life. And also through that Spirit our spirit, that was dead in trespasses and sin, is alive! It has been reborn to live within us as a direct communication tool with God. Through our spirit we can pray (Eph 6:18) to God and always have direct and immediate communication with God. I think sometimes because of the abuses that have occurred within the church concerning the Spirit, we tend to not talk about the Power that God gives us through His Spirit. Yes, we have to be careful. But at the same time we don't want to throw out the Comforter with the dirty laundry. We have been given the Comforter, God's Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth and to help us understand the Word that God has given us. Thank you, Lord, for sending your Spirit to give us LIFE!

May the fullness of life and truth be with you today and always! Rudy

I Love Life! I love the crispness of the air in the early morning. I love the sunrise -- and the sunset. The older I get the more of them I have had to enjoy. Through God's good creation we get just a glimpse of His Glory. I believe it is in those moments that we are truly touched by the beauty of this earth that we are seeing through that veil and catching just an inkling of what heaven must be like. We are but pilgrims here. Heaven is our home. And as much as I love life on this earth, I know that is just a glimmer of what we will be experiencing for all eternity when the veil is removed and we see God face to face. What a glorious and exciting adventure it will be when Jesus calls our name.

Each day we should praise God for the joys and pleasures that he blesses us with here on this earth, but even more we should "rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20) I know when you are young and full of life, as many of you are, heaven seems a long way off. But, as the body fades, the focus becomes more and more toward our heavenly home. It is where the effects of sin cannot reach us. It is where the sicknesses caused by sin in this world will not cause our bones to be frail or our eyesight weak. It is the place where we will be able to shake the hand that was stretched out for us on the cross. And we can say, Thank you, Jesus, for the awesome sacrifice that got us a ticket home. May each of you enjoy life today, to its fullest. But remember, it is but a glimpse of the joy waiting for us in heaven. Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

The Battle Let me say right up front that the battle belongs to the Lord. And the war is won. But sometimes in our daily struggles it is not as easy to discern how the tide of the battle is going. Right now, Noah (my 4 year old) is trying very hard to be good, because he has started preschool. And he knows, since he was expelled from Vacation Bible School, that he has to be good or else he might not get to continue to go to preschool. So, you might say that he has good motivation right now. But still, I can just sit back and watch him and know that he is still struggling and many times has to be reminded of why he is motivated.

We also need that daily reminder that we are on the winning side and that the fight is worth it. I find that my prayer time in the morning and the time I spend writing to you refocuses me for the day ahead. Many times by evening the focus is fuzzy. We are such fickle people. That is why our strength must come from the Lord and not from ourselves. And we have many fantastic promises, like 1 John 4:4. We have just been told in the first part of the chapter to test the spirits to see which ones are from God. Then John says, "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." What a great reminder! God is the best. There is no one or thing or demon or situation that can get the better of God. In His strength, we are always the victor! Thanks be to God who gives us the victory -- over sin, death, and Satan. Go forth in His strength! Rudy

Hope WithinA few years back, I filled in at our church when we had a youth director vacancy. For the year that I helped out, I had a theme verse that I used for some of the classes. It was 1 Peter 3:15; "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do so with gentleness and respect." There's kind of an implied message in this verse that if you have Christ set apart as Lord in your heart that there will be something different about you and people will ask you what it is. Then you have the perfect witnessing opportunity: the person is asking you about God. Then we are told to be prepared to give an account for the hope that is within us, and to do it gently.

I call this whole process lifestyle evangelism. And it is tailor made for this day and age with the emphasis that is put on individual rights. There have even been attempts to outlaw talk about Jesus in the workplace. I don't quite know how they justify that with free speech, but God gave us a tool for this very situation. If we "walk the walk" people will notice. And the gospel will be preached by your actions. Then based on a personal relationship the gospel can be shared one person at a time. Now, of course, this puts a little burden on you and the way you live. I believe that's why Peter started out by saying, set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts. With that foundation, your life will be noticeably different from the rest of the worlds. This is the process by which the tide in America can be reversed. Each Christian living the life that God has called them to and changing lives one person at a time. The process is called discipleship. The author is Jesus himself (Mat 28:19) and it's a great plan!

May God bless your life today with a noticeable difference!Rudy

Camping Yes, I got to spend a wonderful weekend of retreating with my whole family - Jason even came home from college for a few days -- in the beautiful Colorado Rockies. And most of the time things went well. But there were a few times when all of us in that camping trailer was a little tight. I've decided our family acts a lot like an internal combustion engine. Noah (4) is like the spark plug. But, unlike an engine he usually starts the whole process. Then, Jeremiah (12) throws on a little explosive gas. And yes the timing is always bad. Everyone else starts chiming in like pistons coming from all angles just to compress the situation. Then it's up to me. I'm like the key to the car. If I'm having an attitude problem, all I have to do is turn into the situation and we have ignition. A full blown explosion. On the other hand, I also have the power to handle the situation in a little better way and kept everybody from heading down anger lane.

Each of us are called to be part of something. Or maybe more than just one something. We have to play our roles. Many times an attitude at the wrong time can play right into Satan's hand, spreading anger and discord. And many times, even when everyone else is having a bad day you alone can be the one that brings peace to a situation. Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." Mat 5:9 Into every situation a little discord will fall. But, each of us have the Peace that Passes all Understanding inside of us. His name is Jesus. And at our baptism He moved in to stay. We can call upon Him in the day of trouble and He will allow us to become those peacemakers. Attitude Check? I hope yours is one of peace today! May the Peace of Jesus be with you today! Rudy

LUST! I want to start this little discussion by saying that I am writing to both the girls and the guys out there, even though I will sound like I'm writing to the guys. For us this subject is just a little closer to the surface. Yesterday at lunch two of the guys that work for me got into a discussion of lust. I heard about it after lunch. One was saying that even if you look at a girl and say she's pretty that you're lusting. The other said that you had to dwell on it for a while. Later he said he thought a little fantasy was OK, just not a lot. Needless to say I found the whole discussion interesting. At least these young unmarried guys are aware that lust exists and that at some level it is wrong. My guess is that that is better than at least 80% of society.

So what is the answer? I take a shot at it, but I would like to hear your responses, too. Jesus says, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Mat 5:28 Now as I have said before, I think that you can look at a pretty lady and admire her beauty and maybe even give God the glory by saying, "Lord, you really did a good job there," and that's not lust. However, it can quickly become lust at that point. It simply is defined by what you are thinking. That's why it is a good idea to look the other way. Webster's defines lust as 1. sexual desire or appetite, and 6. to have strong sexual desire. I do not personally believe that any sexual fantasy is acceptable. That is one of those lies the world would has us believe. Well, a little sin is still sin and worse yet, it opens the door for even greater sin. But, since every human since the dawn of time has struggled with this issue, isn't it GREAT that Jesus has saved us by GRACE and not based on our thoughts or desires! Praise God for his Amazing Grace! May the Almighty Father bless you and give you His love today! Rudy

Homesick?What is home sickness? Some of you may know the feeling all to well. As a camp counselor over twenty-five years ago, I still remember one night about midnight, hearing this muffled whimper. It was so soft that I didn't know if I was dreaming or if it was real. After listening for a while, I decided that it was real and I needed to climb out of bed and check it out. That summer I had been given 7 year olds. Many of whom had never spent the night away from home and now all of a sudden they were a week away from all that was familiar. After searching my cabin, I found one little young man snuggled down in his sleeping bag trying not to let his sobbing wake anyone up. We talked. He finally slept. But in that situation there is no substitute for Mommy.

Where is our home? Of course it is heaven. Do we ever get homesick for heaven or are we too comfortable down here? I've always loved the little story that Jesus tells about the man finding a treasure. "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field." Mat 13:44 We are to give up everything just to own that treasure of heaven. Nothing should get in our way. And what we are longing for is that perfect relationship with Jesus. We have but a foretaste of the joy to come. But it is enough to glimpse the value of what awaits us. How blessed will that homecoming be! Thanks be to Jesus for leading us to the treasure and then paying the price for us to buy the field!

May the presence of Jesus comfort your homesickness!Rudy

A SpeckMy home telephone went out yesterday and is still not working. I don't know if it had anything to do with 9-9-99 computer problem. I don't know for sure when I'm going to send this devotion. But, I am sure that God has it all figured out. As I was praying this morning, I was filled with awe at just how magnificent God's good creation is. The earth sitting in space is glorious enough. But then all the stars and the planets, just the sheer expanse is enough to proclaim that an awesome Creator did an awesome work. But the real impressive part is that that Mighty Creator is the one and same God that knows my name and took the interest in me to die for my sin. I am not even a speck in the over all scheme.

"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" Ps 8:3-4 I can imagine the young David out watching the flock at night. I am sure the night sky was even brighter then, without all our light and air pollution. As I contemplate the same contradiction that David struggled with, I can only come to the same conclusion: "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" Ps 8:9 So whether or not my phone is out from a 9-9-99 glitch, or whether or not Y2k is going to bring an end to civilization as we know it; I got a God who knows my name! and He cares for me! what shall I fear? Nothing, baby -- absolutely nothing!

He knows you and He cares for you; may you rest in that assurance, today!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

X-Ray EyesI've taken on something that I haven't done before. I am trying to build my son a car by putting the exterior shell of a 1968 Scout over the frame and engine of an 1985 Blazer. I like doing new things that have a challenge to them. They don't always work out but it is amazing what you learn by doing. So far I've taken the exterior off of the Blazer. It had been rolled, so all the body was shot anyway. But even though the body was all dented and the glass was broken, it still looked better before I took the outer shell off. Now sitting there without any skin on it looks like something from a Mad Max movie. With just the frame showing I'm hoping I can see anything I need to fix before I put the new body on.

Of course, this is a perfect analogy to what God does for us. For the rest of the world we put on this show, even though we are dented and cracked we think we look pretty good. But, God can see through all our pretenses and cover-ups. And He loves us anyway! (Remember, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Rom 5:8) Then He strips us down like a refiners fire and remakes us, "to be conformed to the likeness of his Son." (Rom 8:29) It is not a fast process, in fact it takes a lifetime. The old saying, "Be patient, God's not finished with me yet," applies to us all. Unlike my work on Jason's car, however, you and I aren't God's first project. God is the perfect craftsman. Through our trials and sufferings and, yes, the good times too, He will remake us. In Him we will be His New Creation. Praise God for His loving and tender workmanship!

May the God of all Creation smile upon you today!Rudy

Premeditated We talked about a lot of things in class last Sunday, but predominately it was the difference between premeditated sin and sin that just creeps up on you. All theology majors, profs, pastors and other smart people -- please let me know if you disagree, and why, because I'm sure some of you will; but we decided that there is a difference. On one hand we have the sin that we daily struggle with. Paul gives us comfort concerning this sin when, in Romans 7:15-25, he shares with us that he continually wrestles with doing the good that he wants to do but ends up doing the wrong that he does not want to do. He ends by pointing to the cross for salvation in verse 24: "Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God -- through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

There is another kind of sin that I think is much more dangerous. It is when we know that it is wrong and we plan to do it anyway. We looked at the Hebrews verse in class that says: "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." 10:26-27 "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." 10:31. Mike made an interesting point: Jesus didn't come to save us from the devil; He came to save us from God! God is the only one that has the power to send us to eternal damnation. It is only through the blood of Jesus that we appear right to God. But Hebrews warns us not to "deliberately keep on sinning."

If there is a vice that you have embraced as your "pet" and have decided that God will overlook it -- think again. Struggle against that sin. Take it to the foot of the cross and leave it there. Above all don't plan to sin! Fight against it. Flee the situation. And call upon the name of Jesus to give you strength!

May the God of all give you strength not to sin! Rest in His comfort! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

To Boast My little Hannah (she is 8 not 9 like I told you before) has just started real ballet classes. She was very happy with the way she performed and was even complimented by the teacher. One thing else that you need to know is that Hannah is my first daughter after God blessed me with 4 boys. So when she came along her mother and I were very happy. This is not to say that she gets special treatment from her Dad (at least not all the time.) But, there have been occasions when we have had the opportunity to talk about Pride. This is the thing that goeth before a fall (Proverbs 16:18), only breeds quarrels (Proverbs 13:10), brings on disgrace (Proverbs 11:2), brings a man low (Proverbs 29:23), was Satan's big sin (Isaiah somewhere), and what Paul warns against and then goes ahead and does (2 Cor 11). So I had to give her a way to handle feeling proud about her accomplishments without falling into the traps that Pride holds. So I found this verse to share with Hannah. "Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to someone else," Galatians 6:4. I think this verse warns us about the aspect of boasting that makes someone else feel bad or put down. That's bad. But, God gave us our intellect and our bodies and there is nothing wrong in taking pride in ones own accomplishments. One other thought: We need to always remember the giver of that intellect and our bodies and give Him all the glory. We should not try to glorify ourselves above others or above God. Whatever you do do it with all your ability as if serving Christ Himself.

Soli Deo Gloria (SDG) to God alone be the glory. Rudy

Slippery Slope Some of you know that I have been trying to finish my own roof for over a year. Winter is coming soon so I renewed my efforts to get back to it. So much so, that I've put a couple of the guys that work for me on the job of tearing off the old shingles. So that's where I left them, on my 7-12 pitched roof and went off for a meeting. Now I have to admit that these guys are dedicated. I came back around noon in a steady drizzle, expecting to find them in the warm house having lunch. Instead they were still up there! With just a little bit of rain that roof had turned into a slippery slope of little asphalt ball bearings. So with a little coaxing, I got them to give up on the work and carefully make their way to the ladder and the ground.

I think that sin is also like the situation that my hard working guys found themselves in. As you're working along in life, you might not notice yourselves sinning just a little. Or if you do, you think you can handle it. Before you know it, the slope you are on has become too slippery to negotiate. You find yourself wanting to get off, but not really knowing how to negotiate out of the place that you've stuck yourself. Satan is deceptive. Sin is deceptive. Sometimes we even let our own selves deceive us. We have only one way off that slippery slope. The man Christ Jesus. Because He became a man, He understands the struggles and the foolish situations that we let ourselves get into. And He can help us out. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me." Psalm 50:15 We have His promise that whatever the trouble -- enemies, slippery roofs, or yes even sin -- he will be there to help us out. To talk us off the slippery slope that we find ourselves on.

Go ahead, call His name, let Him know where you're at. He can help! Rudy

Time for GraceLately, we've been talking a lot about sin. I think it's good to strive not to sin. But when it comes right down to it, we have all fallen short of the goal. There is not any other answer than the Grace of God. In our own personal relationship with God I think He evens does the same thing. He'll remind us of our sin, help us to conquer it, but in the end He'll remind us of His grace. As I was using my climbing rope and harness to keep from sliding off of the slippery metal roof that I'm putting on our house, I was reminded of that grace. For just a moment I could stand without slipping, but without the confidence of that rope I wouldn't even of tried to stand on my own. And the second I did slip, that rope meant all the world to me.

We are tied to God by the amazing rope of Grace through Jesus our Lord. That grace gives us the courage to try to live a life without sin. It gives us the strength to resist temptation. But, when we do slip into sin, Grace is the lifeline that connects us to the Savior that pulls us out of our miserable state and grants us the assurance of the hope of heaven.

"But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 5:20-21 Grace Reigns! Sounds like a great refrain for a Praise and Worship song. Grace is the victor over sin and we are the beneficiaries. Thanks be to God -- through Jesus Christ our Lord!

May His assurance of salvation be with you today!Rudy

Time for caring! I feel compelled to write about our time commitments. It's a worn out subject and I don't know if I'll say anything new, but here goes. We all know that we schedule our lives too tightly. With our rushing here and meetings there, if there really were a need for our presence to comfort a friend or build a new relationship, we would have to call on our cell and cancel appointments. I'm all for efficiency, and of course we need to use our time wisely, but we also need to have our priorities straight. In John 4 we see the story of a planned encounter that Jesus had with the Samaritan woman at the well. In verse 8 we are told that Jesus had sent His disciples into town to get food. He delegated. He didn't have to have control over the mundane things of His life. He saved Himself and His time for the more important task of relationship building.

Now, of course, Jesus had divine insight into the situation. Sometimes God might give us that same insight, but most of the time we have to roll with events as they arise. And if we are too busy to sit and talk, the relationship suffers for the sake of the "to do" list. People are won to Christ most of the time through a one on one relationship. When His disciples come back they aren't tuned into the situation. Jesus tells them to open their eyes: "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." John 4:35 How many times have we gone blindly by for the sake of our schedules, only to miss the opportunity that Jesus has placed in front of us. We are told in Romans 12 to not conform to the pattern of this world. Time is a most precious gift that God has given to us; and Satan has the whole world thinking there is not enough of it. We need to slow down and ask God to show us His schedule for our day. Maybe then we won't miss the really important meetings that are on our daytimer. Let Him guide your ways today! Rudy

A Humble Spirit! I must admit that when I talk about a humble spirit that I don't usually fit into the category. But, I think it is something that we should all strive for. We have a great example in the Old Testament person of Caleb. In Numbers 14, God is pronouncing judgment on the entire nation of His people that He brought out of Egypt; with one exception. "But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it." Numbers 14:24 Joshua son of Nun and Caleb alone had trusted God and given a positive report to proceed into the Promised Land. Before God interceded, the other people were even going to stone them.

It is this spirit inside of us that is important to God. It needs to be humble towards God and follow His will "wholeheartedly." What a challenge! This is a place where I can certainly grow and become a more mature Christian. But, I don't think we can even produce the growth ourselves. We have to ask God to grow in us a spirit that is willing to listen to Him. The blessing that God gives us is that He takes his time in molding our spirits to His will. If He were to do it all at once most of us would just snap. But He gently bends, pokes and prods until we start coming around. Open your spirit to Him. Help Him as much as you can in conforming to His pattern and His will for you. Try to be like Caleb: a man who stood out boldly because of a humble spirit.

Live in the Grace and Glory of the Almighty God today! Rudy

Reconciled? Yesterday, I held out my hand to a former employee who was also a friend from church and her response was instance anger. As she walked by me all I could hear was, "I don't ever want to talk to you." It hurt my heart. I've spent many hours between then and now trying to comprehend what has transpired since I last saw her to make her feel the way she does. I'm at a loss to define it. Matthew 5:23 says, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift."

But I ask you, what do you do if that brother won't even talk to you? I personally believe that this is why we are given the 3 step program of Matthew 18 to solve disputes among ourselves. You know, Step 1 -- go and talk with them, Step 2 -- (if 1 doesn't work) take two friends with you to talk with them, Step 3 (if 1 & 2 don't work) get the church to help. If you go and talk with someone who you think has wronged you then it can be dealt with before it festers and becomes unreconcilable. I had no clue that this kind of animosity had built up between us. I have no way to "be reconciled" to this person. Right now all I can do is to pray for God to soften her heart so that whatever is between us can be resolved. And I can certainly forgive her for any anger she has towards me, even though I can't understand it. Each of us needs to always be aware of when we might offend someone else, but I believe that the greater responsibility lies with the one who thinks they are being offended. You must go to that person and resolve it. Don't let it become a cancer that can be used as a tool of Satan.

May each of you walk in the blessing of the Almighty God today! Rudy

Straight On Last night, Noah (my 4 year old) and I had a wonderful time roller skating. I kept him from falling and he gave me an excuse to go real slow. Most of the time we did fairly well as long as he was holding my hand and trying to go forward. Sometimes, however, he would get a little more scared and reach around with his other hand so that he was holding on with both hands. This almost always resulted in his outside foot coming around and crashing into me. So I had to teach him to keep going straight that he had to only hold on with one hand.

So here's the tie. As long as we are holding onto God but still pressing straight on, looking outward towards others we can keep from falling. But, if you turn in on yourself, like self-pity or even the opposite direction of pride, we are bound to take a tumble. In Isaiah 14, one of the five "I wills" of Satan is this: "I will make myself like the Most High." 14:14 this is like the ultimate sin of Pride. He still uses it today. Most of the cults have some form of becoming a god in their beliefs. To be able to serve God in the world today, I think that we have to keep the focus off of ourselves and on to others and God. If we turn inward, for self pity or self glorification or even selfishness, we are taking the focus off of God and putting it on ourselves. Think of yourself like a little four year old skating: one hand firmly in the Father's hand and the rest of you looking out at the big world, just waiting for the Word of God.

With the help of the almighty God and His divine guidance, may you keep pointing straight on to the Gospel of Jesus today!
Rudy

Golden NuggetsA number of years back, at a Promise Keepers rally in Denver I was fortunate enough to hear Dr. Dobson speak. He challenged us to transport ourselves forward to the end of our lives. He asked us to consider what would have meaning for us at that time. I am positive for me it won't be the number of real estate deals I've done or the kind of car I have sitting in the drive way. I believe for me it will be the joy of the hope of heaven, looking forward, and the joy of the relationships with family and friends, looking backward. I am sure for each of us these "golden nuggets" of our life will be different.

But the big question is: What in your life are you now spending time on? Is it acquiring those business deals and fancier cars, or even the highest test score in class or the most goals in the soccer game; that when all is said and done won't mean squat? Or is your time being spent on the things that will have true meaning, both to you and everlasting salvation for others? The writer of Hebrews says it this way: "See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But, encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first." Hebrews 3:12-14. If we truly spend our life 'encouraging one another daily', I believe we will pass the end of life test.

May the God who grants all the encouragement needed for the day, be with you and guide you to His purposes today!

Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Harvest MoonPicture this. On Saturday night high in the Colorado Rockies, 60 people smushed into this wagon filled with hay, being pulled along by this old tractor and up comes this beautiful full moon. There were comments like, "Wow, is that bright!" and "Hey, turn that light off." I was amazed at how bright it was. It lit up the surrounding area and put a glow on the tops of the trees. One poet among us even said, "Look how the moonlight kisses the tops of the aspens." It wasn't hard for us to give Glory to the Creator, for what He had made was very good. It also wasn't hard for me to come up with an analogy for a devotion.

That very bright moon had no light of its own. It was only reflecting the light of the sun. And, of course, we all know that the reason it was full and so bright is that nothing was in the way of its view of the sun. Our life is to be like that moon. We have no light of our own, only the True Light of the Son of God that shines through us. And we are at our very best when there is no sin between us and God to block the light. "Praise him, sun and moon, praise him all you shining stars." Psalm 148:3 All the moon had to do to Praise God was to show up! and let the light of the sun shine through it. For us many times I think it's that simple. If we show up, half the battle is over. Then if we let the light of the gospel shine, there is nothing that God cannot accomplish through us. So let the Light shine on!
May the Light of the Son of God shine through you today!Rudy

Just Cause Many of the things I try to talk about in these little morning talks could easily become a doctoral dissertation, yet for our purposes they need to be short and to the point. So many times I may leave obvious things unsaid or deal with the same issue over several mornings. The following may employ both techniques. We struggle with fairness. The world certainly isn't fair. Life; we all know that's not fair. But shouldn't God be fair? Yes, without a doubt I think God should be fair and I believe that God is always fair. I think what suffers is our perspective. God says to Job: "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?" Job 38:2 Wow, what a slap in the face! But yet those words apply to us every time we question God.

One of Noah's (my 4 year old) favorite sayings for about the past month is, "I want the kids to be in charge!" He realizes that many times there is a difference of opinion about the way things should happen. I even think he is starting to realize that there may be some logic behind why the "grownups" do things the way they do. But he still thinks he knows best and things should be ordered the way he wants. I know if we followed his guidance, that at the end of the day he would at least be sick to his stomach and at worse he might not live through the day. Now, I as a loving parent will not always take the time to explain everything to him. For one thing, I don't have that much time and there are many things that he just doesn't get yet. We must realize that God's knowledge is so much further above ours that this analogy doesn't even come close to doing it justice. We also must realize that God loves us with a perfect love; one that no other father can emulate. At some point in time we must just accept those two facts and then realize that even though we don't always understand it, God is always right -- and just! This subject is a big one, so write to me with your thoughts and I'll respond as we continue to talk about it.

May the Lord bless you with understanding and His perfect Peace! Rudy

HeirsMy real father left when I was only three. I have no memory of him either before he left or when I was older. My Mon remarried when I was five and my Step father, (we call him Grandpa, now) adopted me. The interesting thing, I think, is that at that time, when I was five they went back and changed my birth certificate, effectively eliminating any connection to my birth father. If the world were to search the records they would believe from the evidence that my Step Father is my real Father. This all ties into our discussion of God's love and purpose for our lives. Through Jesus, God has adopted us as His sons and daughters and effectively eliminated any evidence that we ever belonged anywhere else. Galatians 3:29 says, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

By faith in Christ we take our place in the family tree of the people of God. Now of course the greatest benefit to this ancestry is the promise of salvation through Faith in Jesus. But it also lets us claim all the promises God made to the people of the Old Testament. And here's the one I'm aiming at today: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11 There are some that would say that this is Old Testament stuff and does not apply to us. They would say that God somehow deals with us differently than with His chosen people. Bunk! Through Christ, I am an heir to that promise. It is so seamless that, just like my birth certificate, if anyone could search the records in heaven they would find that we are part of God's chosen people and heirs with all the rights and privileges of being sons and daughters!

Be assured of your adoption into the family of God!**Rudy**

Waiting FatherWe've been talking the last couple of days about why things happen. In Just Cause I basally said that God is a loving Father and He knows best. Yesterday, I linked us to Abraham's seed and tied the Old Testament promise to each of us. And tomorrow, I want to go back to the flip side of that promise in Jeremiah. But today, I would like to talk about those times that we are caught in what seems to be endless suffering. We pray that God would relieve the situation, but it just continues. I know that each of you can think of times that fit this mold. One reason, certainly not the only reason, can be explained by God's patience for us. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." And in 1 Timothy 2:4 we're told, "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11) might better be called the Parable of the Waiting Father. For in it, we see how God waits for us as we go through our rebellious stages. Even as an earthly father, I know that there are times that pushing one of my children will just make the situation worse. Most of the time, I can outwait the situation and be there to help put the pieces back together when they are ready to listen. God has the ultimate degree of patience. He can outwait us even in our most stubborn and rebellious times. And maybe the situation drags on not even for our benefit but for the benefit of someone close to us. I know it sounds like a mind game, just looking for justification. But the place that I have really been able to gain insight into a long painful drawn out situation is in retrospect. After it is over, I can look back with 20/20 hindsight and get just a small glimpse into the things that God was working out in my life. The phrase, "Be patient with me, God not finished yet," really applies to all of us. Ask God what aspect of you He's working on right now, maybe He'll fill you in.

Thanks for waiting, Lord. Hope I didn't keep you too long!

May He bless you in your walk today!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Sin Matters This will be my last in this little series on why bad things happens to Christians, for a while at least. I will start by saying we are saved by grace. No one must misconstrue what I am about to say. We cannot work our way to heaven. No amount of sin can kept us out of heaven. We are saved by the precious blood of our personal Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ through faith. Now that I've made that point clear, we can still say that sin matters. Paul asks the question, should we sin more so that grace may abound, and then answers himself, "Heck, NO!" (Rudy's translation, Romans 6:2) Sin has consequences. The first is that we still have to die a physical death, but the sting has been taken out of that because of our salvation. The second is, there are consequences to sin right here on earth. In Jeremiah, as the prophet is talking about the new covenant that we now live under through Jesus Christ, he says, "whoever eats sour grapes -- his own teeth will be set on edge." Jeremiah 31:30 This means that you reap what you sow. Your sins can and do have consequences. I believe that a loving Father still disciplines His wayward children. "But God disciplines us for our good; that we might share in his holiness." Hebrews 12:10

The disciples in Jesus time knew that a person's sin would have consequences and result in bad things in that person's life. But Jesus makes the point, the same one made in Job that bad things can also happen for other reasons, like to glorify God. "His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' Jesus said, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.'" John 9:2-4 I've tried to make this clear, but I have found that we Christians don't like the word discipline. I'm not sure why, probably because we are saved by grace and we don't want others to be misled. But sin does matter, and our lives can be a whole lot better when we strive not to sin through the power of the Holy Spirit. Be sure and send me your comments. If anyone feels so led, I will even publish your rebuttal to the whole group.

Live this day in the Power of the Grace of God! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
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And your drawings:

Still Small Voice My wife, Dena, gets up just after I'm done in the shower, but only three days a week. The other days she sleeps as late as she can. So instead of setting an alarm, I just whisper to her that it's time to get up. Now the reason I whisper is because during the night one and sometimes two of our younger children have made their way into our bed. As long as I whisper they usually don't wake up. So why is it that my wife can hear me and the kids don't? I promise you it's not because she is a light sleeper. I think it's because she is tuned into my voice, and has learned by practice to pay attention, even when she is asleep. (It's just an opinion)

So anyway, I've been trying to come up with the process by which we recognize sin in our lives and get rid of it. And one of the first steps is to become attuned to the still, small voice of God. (1 Kings 19:12 KJV) The NIV actually interprets this phrase as a "gentle whisper". But, whatever we call it, I am convinced that it takes practice and maturity to hear it. And it is easily overpowered by the sounds of this age. Ephesians 4:13 and following tells us to build up our faith and gives us another benefit of becoming mature. "Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming." (14) The net effect is that becoming mature in the faith is a process and it gives us the ability to resist sin. It's one that we work at; but, faith is still a gift from God, so we have to pray for it, too. And all the while we listen.

Go in the God's peace! Serve Him fully! Rudy

Like the stars! I am stumbling. Don't get me wrong, I think I'm able to walk better than ever before, but I'm still just stumbling. My guess is that maybe by the time my earthly legs have filed me altogether, maybe I'll be walking. I would love to have just this intercom where God spoke to me each morning and said, Today you will do this and that. Then I wouldn't be stumbling so much. But, it's a process. God didn't make us to be robots. This world is so obsessed with control. I have figured out that God will not control me. When I was reborn through baptism and my spirit became alive it became a partnership. This is not like an earthly partnership, where if you turn your back the other partner might steal you blind. This partnership is with the Almighty Creator of the Universe. And still he won't force us to do it His way. He'll gently mold us and help us grow into all the good things that he wants for us.

In Philippians 2:13 we are told that "it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." Then we are told that if we strive to do what God wants without complaining, "you (will) shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life," (15-16) So I say that I am proud to be at least stumbling! As I learn to walk in the will of God won't it just be so exciting! Can you imagine carrying that "word of life"; the message that Jesus has died and wants to give the gift of life freely to all who ask; can you just imagine carrying that wonderful news to a lost and dying generation. How blessed will be your feet to the one that you share the message with! They might not kiss them in this world; but you can be sure in heaven they will say "thank you" for making all the difference in their life. So shine like the stars in the heaven! Let people know that Jesus Christ wants to be their partner in this life. Grow and learn to walk. Isn't it just the most exciting thing you can imagine for your life! Rudy

"This is a test" One of my dear friends wrote me yesterday and is struggling with the concept of why does God test us. She wonders why God would send things our way when He already knows through His divine foreknowledge how we will react to the test. She already knows that God doesn't tempt us (James 1:13). But she still wonders why God would test us. Logic would dictate that if God already knows how we will respond that the tests must be for us and not for God. We are given the whole concept of a refiner's fire in Malachi 1:2&3 where the prophet is looking forward to the coming of John the Baptist. His job was to cleanse the people from their sins so that they would be ready to meet their Savior. Our tests, I believe usually fall into this category of helping us grow. But at times there may be bigger reasons. In reading the story of Abraham and his testing in Genesis 22, the end result is that Abraham called the place "The Lord will provide." Could it be that the real reason for the Abraham's test was for us? We are told in Genesis 22:18, "and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." He serve as an example to us; as a foreshadowing of the sacrifice that God would have to make for us in sending His own Son; and as a conduit for God's mercy for us. But mostly God's testing of us slowly builds up the endurance that we need to make it to the end of our lives with a saving faith in Jesus Christ. "But he who stands firm to the end will be saved," Mark 13:13 and "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." James 1:12 I know it is frustrating sometimes to think that the present trial is only there to give us the strength to get through the next one. But what we have to remember is that we have a loving God who is with us through all of them and gives us the strength to endure to the end.
May God give you strength for today!Rudy

Hot Water! I think that one of the best parts of my "job" is looking for my next real estate deal. I get to walk around the Colorado Mountains and enjoy some of God's prettiest creation and at the same time call it work. Just this week I visited one of the last remaining undeveloped hot springs this state has left. My wife and I were both surprised at how beautiful it was and both impressed at how nice it would be to preserve it in its natural state. Anyway, the Realtor brought her dogs along. Two Labradors that loved the water. As we started our walk they took a swim in the regular lake above the hot springs. But when we got to the hot springs, no amount of coaxing could keep them out of the water of the hot springs. Through my research I have found out that these hot springs are literally the hottest in the state, with water coming out of the ground close to boiling. Each one of the two dogs had to try it for themselves. And each one jumped out so fast it would have been funny if it hadn't hurt so bad. Then they shook their paws just like we would shake a hand that had been burned.

I was able to impart to my children, however, that the water was hot and to not touch it. They both listened to me and didn't have to endure the painful lessons that the dogs had to learn. I believe that the heavenly Father would also have us escape the pain here on earth associated with learning and growth. But all too often, we are more like the dogs, not willing to listen but intent on trying for ourselves just how painful life's lessons can be. God doesn't want us to endure the pain, but He will let us go our own way if we insist. Wouldn't it be better if we just listened in the first place??? "I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." Psalm 119:104-105 Unfortunately, if you're anything like me, you've felt your share of hot water. But as we grow and learn we realize that God only wants our best; to keep us out of the hot water of life. So when He tells you it's hot -- believe Him!

May the God of all Grace guide you today! Rudy

Lonely Place Many people would say that they would not like to be in a "lonely place." As a matter of fact, I try to avoid lonely places, I would much rather be around the action; where the people are. So much so, that at times I don't think there is any chance for God to break through the noise. Luke tells us in Chapter 5, verse 16 of his gospel, "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." Once the word about the healings of Jesus got out, He became a busy man. But I don't think He had to worry about a cell phone, pager or even a regular phone beside his bed at night. He wasn't near as connected as we are and He still felt the need to get away from the noise of the world so that He could commune with His Father.

Communion with the Father. You know, thanks to the awesome gift of Jesus, His Father is now our Father. We are even told we can call Him Daddy. Do we set aside time to have a heart to heart with our Daddy? I know that many times I am guilty of squeezing Him in on the run. Now if someone really important was going to come and see us, we would probably rearrange our schedule to have the time to talk with the person. Yet, we have the Almighty Creator of the Universe willing to have a private and intimate talk with us about anything that's on our mind and we just "squeeze Him in." As a personal favor, would you intentionally set aside some time for your Daddy in a quiet place today? Have that chat that may be long overdue. I know that you will be blessed by it.

May your communion with the Father be especially sweet today! Rudy

The whole submit thingIn our home group Bible study we are making our way through 1 Timothy, and yesterday we did Chapter Two. This chapter stands out for two passages. It is the chapter that says, "This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Verse 3&4 I think that this is one of the most unifying passages of all time. It tells us that God loves all people, wanting everyone to be saved. It tells us that we turn to Jesus alone for that connection to God. It is just a wonderful passage. In the very same chapter is this verse; "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent." Verse 12 Guess where we spent most of our time in discussion.

This whole submit thing between a husband and wife, and men and woman has always been a problem for me. I think of verses like, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." Philippians 2:3 or "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28 Second only to the Holy Spirit, I have learned more about Scripture and our relationship with God from my wife. And I thank God for the blessing she has and continues to be in my life. I do remember a time about two years into our marriages when I could have "put her in her place." I remember making a conscience decision that that was not what I was there for. I was there to love her as Christ loved the church. That meant I had to be willing to die for her. I believe that the true meaning of submission comes out in that example Jesus gave us, while we were yet sinners He died for us. Because of that unselfish act we now should give our all to Him in obedience and love. Jesus earned that right by His actions! I wonder if I have earned my wife's love by my actions? Thank God, I am saved by Grace!

May the Almighty Father bless and guide you today!Rudy

Coming of the SonI enjoyed an unusually warm (for October) pre dawn walk yesterday. It was the old thing of not being able to sleep in a strange bed, while on a retreat designed to get us to "think outside the box." So I decided to take an early walk and do some listening. The sunrise was truly a blessing from God. A cloud was situated just right to reflect the glorious glow of the coming sun. Just when I thought it couldn't get any better, it intensified until the whole sky the mountains behind and the very ground at my feet glowed with the brightness of the coming sun. It amazed me that this kind of thing goes on every morning and we're too busy sleeping to notice. But then something really neat happened. As the sun was just coming up, a breeze came out of nowhere, setting the trees to swaying and dancing ripples across the lake at my feet. And I remembered again this truth: with the coming of the Son into our lives also comes the wind of the Spirit of our awesome God. It's a promise.

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Acts 2:17&21 "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children" Acts 2:38&39. Each of us who have come to that saving faith in Jesus Christ have received the Gift. However, even at this Spirit led retreat, I have seen that Spirit quenched. That is within our power to do. But how much better to open ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit and live! the life He wants us to. The life of being a Christian in the world today is a grand and glorious calling. But it is also filled with traps and snares. Who better to lead us through than God Himself, through the awesome gift of His Holy Spirit.

May you sense the power that God have given you today!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Barriers There are all kinds of things that can separate us from each other and from God. At least from our point of view. I sat in a room of people at this recent workshop and talked about maybe the only thing that we had in common. The desire to share the love of Christ with young people. But past that common bond, at times it felt like we were unified on nothing else. Of course doctrine kept coming up; after all we are Lutherans. I do believe that we have a purity of teaching that will benefit the rest of the world, BUT if we sit on our laurels and never get out of the planning room what good is it going to do that lost and dying world? Action! You mean actually do something? Yes! But first we should pray. I think that God is so saddened by the barriers that we create to put between ourselves and other Christian brothers. But with the help of the Holy Spirit, I believe that we can recognize those barriers and remove them. We have to always be true to the teaching of Scripture, but we can't be unwilling to bend over and pick up a lost soul because we have a doctrinal difference with our own brothers. Satan loves it when we get sidetracked; it just gives him more time to lure us away from the work that God has set before us. More time to deepen the depravity of this world. We must continue to talk, but we must not neglect the work that is set before us. "And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right." 2 Thessalonians 3:13
May you see clearly through the distractions and do what is good and right! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
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And your drawings:

Collecting! I have developed a passion for collecting certain types of old things. One group is old maps. As I've been going through my office trying to clean up, I've asked myself why I liked old maps. And of course a lot of justification came forth. They're pretty; sometimes even a work of art, and they can give insight into the history at the time they were drawn. But, they aren't very functional; if one were to rely on them today to negotiate the land, one would end up lost. So from the stand point of their original mission, they aren't very useful. I think that many people may put the Bible into a similar category. They may find it interesting from a historical perspective, or even some of them from an artistic perspective, but they don't think of it as a valid road map for life today.

But let me assure you that the Word of God is Alive! It is still valid for us today because the breath of God, His very Spirit, is right there along with the words on the page, making it life changing and life directing stuff. It tells us of the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us; Jesus Christ, our own personal Lord and Savior. And it tells us so much more. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Unfortunately, if you're like me, you may not spend enough time with this alive and life changing road map. It is not enough to have it sit there and look pretty as part of a collection. It must be opened and read. Today, (not tomorrow) spend time with God and His Spirit through His Word. Today is the day that you will need the road map.

May His Word fill you and bless you with His guidance, today! Rudy

Noah Prints Yesterday morning, as I was up early feeding the horses before church, I noticed these little foot prints in the snow. They were from the night before when Noah, my almost 5 year old, had insisted on helping me feed the animals. Of course, his actual help is marginal, but he makes up for it in willingness. If fact, if I could bottle his enthusiasm, I would be a wealthy man. I've often marveled at how when they are young, my children have the desire, time and willingness to help me with the tasks at hand. But when they actually get to have the muscles and the smarts to accomplish things and be a big help, then I have to compete with their busy lives. Many times, it then takes the lure of a paycheck to get them to have that same enthusiasm they had when they were Noah's age.

Of course, I think that we do this kind of thing to our Heavenly Father, also. When we are baby Christians, we have the desire to "take the world for Christ." But, as that faith matures and we actually get the skills that would be of use to the Father, He has to compete with the world; our job, family, leisure time pursuits and committee meetings. So where is that passion? Do we fall into the same boat as the church at Ephesus? "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love." Revelation 2:4 Would Christ say that we have forgotten our first love? It is so hard in this busy, busy world to keep a focus. That focus must remain the Lord Jesus Christ and the ministry He wants to accomplish through us. It must permeate everything that we do and are. What an awesome task that we get to help the Father with! Sharing the love of His Son. Let's regain the first love that we once had and fill our lives once again with the passion that sets us apart from the rest of the world.

May the Lord of Life give your life Fire from above! Rudy

Where God guides -- God Provides I know it sounds like a trite saying, but I truly believe that wherever God guides you to do ministry, He will provide you with the resources to do the work. Our problem is that we want to determine the level and type of resources. For instance, I might like a new BMW so that I could go on the road to preach the gospel. However, God in His infinite wisdom might instead give me a horse, or maybe nothing but a new pair of running shoes. While we are asking God what type of ministry He has planned for us to do, maybe we ought to ask Him how he wants us to get it done. Even when we don't quite get it right, I know that God will still bless us. This is what He promises: "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." 1 Corinthians 9:8 I feel we must realize that God is the giver of all good gifts. We may be the one that goes to work, but God is the one that signs the paycheck. God is the one that blesses us with the next business deal. And the reason He blesses us is so that we can be a blessing to others. Not so we can indulge ourselves. Not so we can build "bigger barns." There is even one step worse than building bigger barns, and that is taking out a loan to do it. Unfortunately, that is where most Americans find themselves. I believe that debt so limits God's ministry. But, God still uses us; He is able "to make all grace abound." Isn't grace wonderful? Isn't God wonderful?! Trust in Him who provides wherever He guides! Rudy

The Three Amigos I dropped by church yesterday to meet my wife for lunch after her ladies group Bible study. She was getting the kids out of the nursery and I was just standing at the end of the hall waiting. Noah, my 5 year old, has these two friends, Alex and Peter. Together they are becoming a force to be reckoned with. Anyway, Noah didn't have his shoes on yet and the other two were ready so out of the nursery door they came at about the speed of light. They saw me and for some reason stopped and backed up against the wall all the time looking at me and giggling like two little boys doing something that they thought they shouldn't be doing. Finally Alex had the nerve to say, "Your, Noah's Dad, right?" And I nodded. Then he said, "Your just waiting for Noah, you not gona scold us, right?" And when I nodded again, they were off at the speed of light, before I could tell them that I could scold them if they wanted me to. Anyway, it was funny when it happened, maybe you had to be there. But, it amazes me that that childhood perception of being able to do something wrong if you don't get caught persists well into adulthood for many people. The fact is God sees it all. How we do our taxes; fill out our time card; drive our car. The list could go on forever. I believe that we as Christians need to realize that we honor our God and give a good witness when we do the right thing even when we could get away with the wrong thing. We are called to a higher level of accountability. Can we claim with Paul, "we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God?" 1 Corinthians 3:2 It is hard to resist the temptation to sin even when we can get away with it. But it becomes a test of our maturity in Christ. He wants us all to grow up into all goodness and blessedness. May the God of our Salvation give you strength to stay clean even when no one is looking! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

With and Without Let's talk power for just a minute. Last night as we were studying Acts, I was so impressed with the difference in Peter before and after he had received the Holy Spirit. Peter says in Matthew 26:53, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." I can relate to Peter. He has a mouth that gets him into trouble. That very night Peter denied Jesus three times. He was afraid to stand up to a servant girl. Now let's look at the transformation. About 6 months later, he is brought before the Sanhedrin for healing a crippled beggar at the Temple. Here he boldly claims, in front of the very governing body that put Jesus to death, "It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed." Acts 4:10 He goes on to proclaim those powerful words, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (12) Where did he get this amazing boldness? From the Holy Spirit of God. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you." Acts 1:8

This gives us a clear picture between trying to do God's work without Him, under our own power, and then what happens with His Spirit. Believers have the Holy Spirit! "Having believed, you were marked with the Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance." Ephesians 2:13-14 We have the same awesome power that enabled an uneducated fisherman to boldly claim that Jesus is the salvation for the world before the combined senate and supreme court of Israel! Unfortunately, we also have the power to squelch the Spirit. Especially when we try to take control from God and do it our own way. But when we do it God's way just look at the power that is available to us! What a great gift our God has given us: His very presence in our life through His Spirit!

Serve the Lord with the boldness that comes from His Spirit! Rudy

The Book of Life My brother just e mailed me and told me that last year sometime he put my name on some Stardust Project. I guess the net effect is that my name is on some microchip flying around in space and someday might get back to earth and be put on display in some yet to be determined museum. Kind of neat, but is there anything really meaningful in it? I suppose, my great-great grandchildren might be able to look me up in their genealogical research projects for third grade, assuming of course that the Lord hasn't come back by that time. But wouldn't it be much better to get your name written on the Book of Life in heaven. It, too, is free. And has so much more significance!

Jesus tried to get this same thought across to the 72 that He sent out two by two. When they came back they were excited that even the demons submitted to them by the authority of the name of Jesus. But Jesus tells them, "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Luke 10:20 Are their friends of yours out there that you know don't have their names on that all important Book? How about the people you don't know? Isn't this a little more important than the meaningless trivialities we get caught up in? This is a club that we want everybody in! There is no membership limit. And it's a free gift to all who believe in Jesus Christ. How about doing some recruiting today?

May the Lord of Heaven and earth bless you and guide you in your work for Him! Rudy

Don't Be AfraidAs I was negotiating the endless plains of central Nebraska and Kansas yesterday, I was searching the radio for something to keep my mind occupied. And I found this show about this folk singer, so I listened in. It turned out to be interesting and I liked the guys music better than most. (His name was Dennis Warner.) He closed out his show with a song entitled, "Don't Be Afraid" which was written about the times he had comforted his young son. It was a powerful song for me primarily because of the similar experiences that I have had comforting my children. I don't know if this singer knows Jesus, but if he ever met Him he could be a powerful witness. As I listened to the song I was struck with an eternal truth that I had first realized years before when I finally allowed Jason (my 19 year old) to go to camp for the first time.

When we as parents say, "Don't be afraid, it will be all right," we really have no way of backing up that statement. We can't always be around our children to protect them. We can even be right beside them and not be able to protect them. It wasn't until I realized that God loves my children even more than I do and He has the power to protect them that I was finally able to start the process of letting them go. Psalm 34:7 promises, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them." Every morning I entrust my children into the loving hands of God and pray for the "angel of the Lord" to protect them. It is such an awesome promise and one that I take great comfort in. So when we tell someone, "Don't be afraid," why don't we add, "because the angel of the Lord is watching over you!" Each morning I also pray for everyone on this list. May the Lord bless you and keep you, now and forevermore!Rudy

Attitude Do you ever get an attitude? I'm not talking about something good. In fact, I believe that they could be from Satan himself. I even can tell when one is brewing over my horizon. It's kind of like a Tsunami, once it breaks everyone is going to get wet. Just the other evening I new I was once again in a battle for my attitude. I could feel it creeping in like a mist in the evening, getting ready to blanket everything in sight. So I prayed. Long time ago, I found that there is virtually no way for me to handle these 'tudes by myself. God sent me two things that were just like a soothing balm to a cracked and bleeding blister. He sent me one of the best sunsets that I have seen in ages. From the eastern plains looking out over Pikes Peak, the entire sky lit up with the "fire on the mountain" kind of glow. Then I walked in and saw my little Naomi (she's 2) after being gone all weekend, and her smile even topped the sunset. And I just said, "Thank you, Lord" as the wave receded without breaking on my beach.

We know from verses like "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" Philippians 4:4 and "rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ." 1 Peter 4:13 that God doesn't like a bad attitude. But there are times that it is so hard to not give in. Then it just turns into a pity party. Or worse, it turns outward in anger, and you end up hurting the ones closest to you. I have found nothing that comes out of a bad attitude that is pleasing to God. And if you are at all like me, you can't handle it alone. So next time you have a battle with a 'tude, call a friend. Or better yet, let God know what your dealing with and ask His help. He is faithful -- the help will be there.

May the loving and caring God that calls us His own, bless you and keep through this day! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Unconditional Love I have figured out that my two year old, Naomi, and my dog, Indy, have something in common. They both love me unconditionally. It doesn't matter to them when I come home how my day has gone. They don't base their amount of love or acceptance on what other people think of me. They don't have to pull a credit report to see if they are going to think I'm OK as a person. They just love me. At the end of day when things haven't gone especially well it is comforting to me to know that they will be there and they will be happy to see me. We all need a certain amount of unconditional love. We who are parents should have unconditional love for our children, and I imagine that most of us do, we just probably show it poorly.

But we all have a God who has that perfect unconditional love for each one of us and knows how to show it perfectly. Because of that relationship we are supposed to take that unconditional love to a lost and dying world. First John 4:13 and following says, "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear." So how about carrying some of that "puppy dog," unconditional love to the world today? I bet you people will notice!

May the God of Love live in you today! Rudy

Wake Up!"He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught." Isaiah 50:4 There are indeed mornings that I wake and am filled with the glory and wonder of the fullness that God has given us. Sometimes it is so sweet that it feels like it would hurt my teeth if I could eat it. Then there are other mornings when I have already begun thinking about the drudgery of the day before my head has even left the pillow. I know the difference. In the latter I am trying to carry the load myself. I am trying to ponder the future and I am using my own resources and abilities to solve all the things that are looming on the horizon. Days that start that way usually go from bad to worse. By the end of the day I feel like I have carried the weight of the whole world and have not held up very well. In fact, I feel like my nose has been pushed into the dirt by the weight of it all.

However, on the other days, when I am able to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on (my) own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5) the day is a totally different day. I enjoy watching how God works out problems. I enjoy seeing and learning how He is going to work right here in my life! The whole difference is where the weight is. On the bad days, I am carrying all the burdens. Not because God has put them there but because I have chosen to take them on myself. How foolish. He promises to carry the entire load. But He will let me do it if I insist. Wouldn't it be much better if we would "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you!" (1 Peter 5:7) Dear Lord, waken me every morning with ears to listen to your teaching and willingness to cast all our cares on you!

Thank you, Awesome God for your strength! Amen! Rudy

Left out in the cold Jeremiah is my pivot child. That is I have three younger than he is and three older. He's 12, and of course, going on 16. Last night as we drove home from a middle school dance we had a chance to talk about things. For some reason I remembered the time when he was 7 or 8 and he got left out in the cold. He has the ability, just like me, to fall asleep quickly and many times very deeply. We had come home late from something and he had fallen asleep in the back seat of the van. The whole family was tired and just unloaded and proceed to go to bed. However, Jeremiah, didn't wake up and we didn't realize he hadn't come in. For some reason, I couldn't sleep well that night and had moved into the living room to sit in my chair so I was able to hear him when, in the middle of the night he had woken in a panic and come pounding on the locked front door.

Many times I think that we fall asleep in our walk with God. We forget that our major goal in life is to love God and others. We get all wrapped up with money or studying or trying to get ahead. We get sidetracked with all the things that Satan puts in front of our face. The good news is that no matter how many children God has, He won't forget us and leave us out in the cold. He will lovingly carry us into the safety of His warmth and cover us with His love. "God has said, Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrews 13:5 When Jeremiah's is older, I hope he doesn't resent being the middle child. Even though I forget him every once in a while, I still love Him very much. And God loves each one of us even more, because it's a perfect love. A perfect love evidenced by the gift of His only Son just so we could come in out of the cold. Praise be to our awesome God!

May the warmth of our most Loving God wrap and enfold you today! Rudy

Obedience Was that you, God? I know I asked you what you thought but it wasn't really you, was it? Probably just me thinking it was you. But no, if that was it you would have agreed with me, so it must have been you. But, Lord, I really want to call this guy and tell him just exactly what I think. But you said don't call?? Let's do this again. This time we'll do a test, just like in the Old Testament. I am going to dial his number, if he's there then you really wanted me to call him and tell him just exactly what I'm thinking. Now, if he doesn't answer, then it's you saying not to call him. OK, God? He's almost always home at this hour of the morning. It would almost be a miracle if he didn't answer the phone. But you're in the business of miracles, right?

Man, this phone is ringing a long time. No answer box or anything? So God, was this you? Are you telling me you really don't want me to call? That just can't be! I really want to tell this guy off. How about another test? We'll call two more times. Then if he doesn't answer, it's really you, God, telling me not to talk to him. OK, God? After all, maybe he was in the bath room. Once. Twice. Still no answer. This is ridiculous! He's always home. Lord, are you trying to tell me something? "Speak the truth in Love." Where'd that come from? Maybe my brain is playing tricks on me. Or, maybe? God, did you put that in my brain?? You really think I could love this guy? But at least I get to speak the truth! But the "in Love" part really messes it up. Well, no, it doesn't really mess it up. If someone had to talk with me about this subject, I would really like them to talk to me in love. OK, God, we'll do it your way. Thanks.

Rudy

A Parade Many times on Sunday afternoon my wife and I, with the kids tucked safely away at Granny's, will just go walk the mall. It's just a little time away, but it seems to help. But we were not quite prepared for the parade of trick or treaters that formed a never ending line around both levels of the mall. It was so solid that you had to ask to be excused just to get through the line into any store. As we watched this endless parade of witches and goblins, we realized that we were in the minority. I am sure that a large percentage of the people there would feel, if asked, that Satan is just made up for Halloween. My fear is, that they also would feel that God is not real either. We have mythicized both good and evil to some level of "force" that can either be "with you" or not based on how hard you concentrate. We, however, are Christians. We know the truth, have been given the truth in written form, and have been given the Holy Spirit so that we can test other spirits to see if they are from God. We must not be lulled asleep by a mass of humanity that is happy with mediocrity and the "force." "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret." Ephesians 5:11-12 We are part of a society that not only "mentions" what the disobedient do, it also makes movies about it and passes laws to protect it. Throughout history, God has always maintained a faithful remnant. I challenge you to part of that remnant! By His grace and favor you are up to that challenge! May he strengthen you today for your walk! Rudy

Deceptive PhilosophyI write a lot about Noah (he's 5, now). There are several reasons. One of them is that I can relate so well with his feelings sometimes. He has this basic urge to burst out of the bounds, any bounds, that are put on him. I, too, share that desire to break free of the world's rules. I have just learned that to function in society I need some level of respect for those rules. But there is one area where Noah and I still differ. Even though he is very forward and outgoing, he is still afraid of strangers. We had a square dance at church last weekend, and as long as he was dancing with his Mom he was having fun. But then the time came to change partners and he wouldn't do it. He took off to sit by himself and we had to wait until we could find another partner for the poor jilted lady.

As we grow, too often we lose that fear and instead start embracing things that are different. Now, of course, we have to be able to do that to grow. Otherwise we would still be hooked on to Mommy's apron strings. The problem comes in discernment. The ways of the world look exciting. We finally are "in charge of ourselves," (something Noah desperately wants to be.) The whole world is in front of us. Paul gives us this warning in Colossians 2:8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through the hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ." He goes on to tell us in the next verse that we "have been given the fullness of Christ, who is the head over every power and authority." It does not matter where in your walk in life you are, the "deceptive philosophy" of this world will be in front of your face -- and very appealing. Just remember that we have the "fullness of Christ." And through His Spirit, the power to discern the deception of this world. Be strong and stand firm! May the fullness of the Almighty Creator of the Universe dwell in you richly today!Rudy

ClutterIt seems that I have been surrounded by clutter lately. I cleaned my office; that helped a little. I wish I could take a leaf blower to my brain. Simplify. Focus. These things seem to be eluding me lately. How is it that we can start a day with so much to do, work really hard all day, and not delete one thing from the list? When I was young I was told that "idle hands were the devil's workshop," or something like that. But I think that this society may have gone the other way to a fault. Could it be that Satan is happy with either extreme? I don't think that our God is a God that makes things happen His way. If we happen to be too busy to hear His Spirit's call, then I think He might just go find someone else to call.

We owe God the very debt of our lives. I think I could work a lifetime and never repay that debt. Yet many of us, myself included, are still working on the down payment. (You know, I am not talking about earning our way to heaven. I am talking about the natural response to the God who saved us from the fiery pit of hell.) Of course, there is no way we could ever repay the debt, but shouldn't we at least try, instead of feathering our own nests? When David was hard pressed on all sides he writes, "For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life." Psalm 56:13 After we have been delivered from death we GET to walk before God in the light of life! What a fantastic walk! So next time you are faced with the clutter of this world; LOOK UP!, and walk in the light from above. Even the "to do" list might look brighter.

May the God who rescued you from hell also rescue you from a meaningless day!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

Lined area for writing thoughts.

And your drawings:

By Faith How many things does the Christian do by faith?? Let's see how many I can name. 1. We stand firm in our faith, Isa 7:9; 2. Move mountains, Mat 21:21; 3. It can heal us, Luke 8:48; 4. Do even greater things than Jesus did, John 14:12 (Wow); 5. Be obedient, Romans 1:5; 6. Be encouraged, Romans 1:12; 7. LIVE!, Hab 2:4; 8. Eat, Romans 14:2; 9. Not eat, Romans 14:23; 10. Extinguish Satan's darts, Eph 6:16. That's just a few. But the one I wanted to get to was this one: Be justified. Now I know that we all know this, but it doesn't hurt to go back to Gospel 101 every once in a while. Especially if we have been getting back into that old routine of trying to earn our salvation by all the good things we have been doing. Who me? Well, I think there's a little bit of that in every one of us. And we need to be reminded of two basic things.

The first is that everyone, yes even you and me, have fallen short of being able to work our way to heaven. Only one perfect man has ever lived and that was Jesus himself. He became the spotless lamb of God that was acceptable to the Father in order that we might be saved BY FAITH through the wondrous sacrifice that He made on our behalf. We cannot get there (Heaven) by what we do, only by what we believe! "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'The righteous will live by faith.' ... Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us," Galatians 3:12-13 So the second thing is that the Christian is justified, made right with God, by Faith, and only by faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Heb 11:6) So when you are workin' hard today to be the good person that you know God wants you to be, remember that it is in response to our faith that we try to live that life. It is not now or ever will be an alternative route to Heaven.

God loved us so much, that while we were yet sinners, He sent His Son to die for us. Praise Him with your very LIFE!
Rudy

Trust God with the Consequences For some reason lately, several people have asked me some really tough questions; with far reaching ramifications. As I have been pondering the correct answers, I was blessed with this little verse in Job. This is a young friend of Job named Elihu talking, and he makes the claim early in his speech that he is filled with God's Spirit, and after reading his words I believe it. He says this of God: "If it were his intention and he withdrew his spirit and breath, all mankind would perish together and man would return to dust." Job 34:14 It reminded me of the verse like it that Paul uses in the New Testament. "For in him we live and move and have our being." Acts 17:28 Now I know this following logic may seem like a leap for some of you, but it seems clear to me at this moment. Whatever our struggle, we simply must do what is right and trust God with consequences. Even if from our viewpoint those consequences may include drastic repercussions. Like "my family will disown me," or "I'll never be able to repay that debt," or whatever other terrible thing you can imagine. God is bigger than all of it. If He even just took a nap, the entire world would cease to exist. We would wink out of existence. Now if He's that involved in the big picture don't you think He has the details well in hand? I do. Do what is right, and trust God with the consequences. They are out of our control anyway. Why worry about them? Besides God is awesome and He loves us! Who better than God to trust the details to?

May you live and move and have your being in our great God today! Rudy

Soaring"But those whose hope is in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles;" Isaiah 40:31 I am poised on the edge of a cliff. By falling it means almost certain death. But to soar; Oh how I long to soar. To be free of the bonds that tie us to this world. To be free of the earthly cares. To bask in the pure warmth of the Father's amazing grace. The only thing I need to soar is trust. The Heavenly Father has given me all that I need to trust Him. He has given me a life time of experience to look back on and see that every time I tried to do it myself, I fell to the depths of the gully. And every time I have trusted Him with the means and the outcome, I have soared to the mountain tops and beyond. Why, Oh Why do I keep trying to do it myself. Where, Oh Lord, do you hide the trust that I so desperately need to be able to walk this land for you?

Maybe if I looked behind my own ego; my own self enlightenment; my own reason and intellect; that desire to know the outcome before I step off the edge of the cliff. In fact, it demands that I know the outcome before I step. It is the enemy; my own physic. Lord, please grow my spirit so I can trust you with the outcome. Allow me the strength of spirit to trust in your Spirit to lead the way. It is truly my desire to soar with You. To accomplish the things that you would have me do and not my own selfish agenda. Oh God, You are my God and I will ever praise you! Step by step you'll lead me; and I will ever praise You!"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it." 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
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And your drawings:

Questioning God Recently I received this email from someone I didn't know that simply said, "Who elected him to be GOD?" That was it. No other explanation. So I've been praying about how to answer this question. Two approaches have surfaced. One, of course, the tough guy approach, would simply be to quote the whole back half of Job to this person. "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man and I will question you, and you shall answer me." Job 38:2,3 Then explain that at the "God level" there is no election. He simply is the Great "I Am" and that is that. But this approach seems a little heavy handed, and I am reminded that Isaiah tells us that He will not break a bruised reed. And if there is one feeling I get from this question it is that this person is bruised. So the second approach that I considered is the "greatest gift" approach. Simply put it goes like this: Jesus took on the form of our humanity and suffered all the painful trials that we suffer, yet He didn't sin. He then proceed to offer His life as a ransom for any who might call upon His name. Offering us a free gift of salvation by accepting the weight of my sin and the sin of the entire whole; and then paying the price for that sin -- death. A death that I should have had to pay. Instead I now can claim everlasting life through His sacrifice for my sin. This very act of selflessness qualifies my Jesus as God and Lord of the entire universe. Once again it is beyond an election, for there is no one worthy to vote, not even one. God is God and He proved it by His love for ME! The next time Satan talks you into questioning God, refer back to this and decide for yourself whether you need a dose of the law or the good news of your salvation. Maybe you'll need both.

May the indisputable God of the Universe bless you with His wisdom and insight, today! Rudy

What's in a name? So here's a follow on question to yesterday. Something to the effect of "Does God have to be called by a certain name for it to be the right one?" This is a form of a question that has been floating around since time began. And I am positive that Satan was the first one to ask it. You see if we say that our name for God is the only one we seem to be intolerant, shortsighted or close minded. Luckily this is not a question that we have to worry about. Peter, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in front of the rulers of his day, boldly proclaimed the answer for us. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12 I don't think it was an accident that Peter used the word "name" in his proclamation. In the Greek this word can "imply authority, e.g., to come or do something in or by the name of someone; by his authority, with his sanction." (1) Authority; Power; these are things that are central to the Gospel message, for without the authority won for us by Jesus Himself our claims would mean nothing!

"I write to you dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name." 1 John 2:12 "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under earth and every name confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:9-11 As C. S. Lewis says, it is impossible to claim that Jesus was only a good moral teacher. He did not leave that as an option for us. Either he is the Son of the Living God or He is a lunatic. (2) I stand firmly in the camp right along with Peter that there is no other name under heaven which we can call upon to be saved. Jesus is the one and there is no other! We have clearly been given His name. If we want to call him something else, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

Praise be to Jesus the Savior of the world! Rudy(1) Word 3686 on page 1048 of the Complete Wordstudy Dictionary by Zodhiates.(2) Mere Christianity, bk II, Chap. 3, para 11, 13

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Lurking Last night I walked into a local bookstore. I was alone, which with my large family, was unusual. Because I was waiting to pick up my son from worship team rehearsal at church, I was not in a hurry, which is also unusual. But it was not enjoyable. I "felt" an uneasiness in my spirit. I was being bombarded with all kinds of lustful desires that I have long since given to Jesus. Now, of course, many of you will say that it was just my "old Adam" or "conditioned response" that brought out those old feelings, and you may be right. But, deep in my heart, I am sure that there were other forces at work at that bookstore last night. Have you ever walked into a place and just felt uneasy? Or immediately on the defensive against an old sin that you thought you had conquered?

There is a story about a demon possessed man in Luke 8:26 and following that gives us a glimpse into this world. "When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town." I find it interesting that it seems that the man came to Jesus, even though later we read that he knew that Jesus was the Son of God and he was afraid of Jesus. "And they (the demons) begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss." They wanted to stay in the area. One author of a best selling spiritual warfare book says they were "tied" to the area. Now, I'm not sure that there are areas where demons are "tied" to to do their nasty work, but I do think there are areas where they can be more effective at their work. Most of these areas we as Christians would not normally go. But, in today's world those areas have expanded greatly. We must always be ready to "Stand firm .., with the belt of truth buckled around your waist." Ephesians 6:14 So the next time you're met at the door by some nasty feelings, rely on the truth that you have learned and say a prayer of protection. You can also do what I did -- go check out the books on business. May the Sovereign Lord, protect and keep you this day! Rudy

Tangled Up We have these birds, kind of like chickens, that are called Guineas. They're not too bright and at times can be very noisy. When I went out to feed them yesterday morning, I saw that one of them was dragging some string from one of its feet. So, of course, I had to do a little surgery. It was pretty simple to remove, but I was amazed at how tangled around his one foot it had gotten. We are so like that guinea. Sometimes things get so tangled around us that we are hopelessly trapped by them. We drag it around behind us, and if anyone wants to get our attention, all they have to do is step on it. It brings us to an immediate halt and puts us totally at their mercy. In the case of the bird, he had no chance whatsoever of freeing himself from the string. In our case, I feel too, that we have no chance of freeing ourselves.

Without a loving God we would be destined to carry that baggage around with us until it killed us.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." Hebrews 12:1-3 Of course, the bird couldn't thank me. But we can thank God! By ourselves, there was no possibility of cutting that sin away. But, now that God has done it we can run! And with our eyes on Jesus we won't even get tired! Thanks be to God.

May the one who has cut away your baggage, bless you with strength for the day! Rudy

Ogling) was the youngest of six children, so as I was growing up I had a lot of "role modeling." It's funny, but one of the expressions I remember from my brother, when he was caught by his wife looking at another woman, was: "I'm married, not dead!" Now for some reason, as a highschooler, I thought this response was pretty cute. It is amazing how, as the Holy Spirit gets hold of a person, all those little cute things of youth fall under scrutiny, and one by one they tumble. Let me give you a Biblical role model and how he handled the situation. In Job 31:1, the man whom God had allowed Satan to ruin, even though Job had done nothing wrong, says this: "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl."

Now I know that this is such a little thing that the world says if you stop looking then you must be dead. In other words, the worldly wisdom says we are just animals and can't help ourselves when it come to this lusting thing. Once again, the world's view is wrong. The whole of creation was made by God speaking it into existence. Except us. God formed us out of the dirt of the ground and then He breathed life into us. We are different from animals; we have been formed in the image of God. We have the ability to "make a covenant with our eyes." And to not look lustfully on a girl is just the first thing that we should covenant. I am sure there are many things we could think of to include in this covenant. May the Holy Spirit guide you in making a "covenant with your eyes." And may He bless you in this covenant! Rudy

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"Deep Truths" "They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience." 1 Timothy 3:9 This week I am going to try to address several deep truths of the Bible. But, today I'm going to start out with a story to illustrate an overriding principal when dealing with these deep truths. (If I've used this story before, I'm sorry, but my memory won't seem to function very well right now.) When I was in third or fourth grade I had a very disturbing incident with my bike. I grew up in a small town and I was allowed to go just about anywhere on my bike. One day, while several blocks from home, this bigger boy forced me to take him somewhere he wanted to go on my bike. It was my first experience with someone with the might just making me do something I didn't want to do. Because this was one of those giant steps into the real world, it really shook me up. So, of course, I went running home to Mommy. She shared with me a deep truth from God that I really needed to hear right then. Even though I might get far enough away from my Mommy that she couldn't hear me when I called, I could never get that far away from God. He would always hear me and would always be with me. For us now, that's not really very deep; but, at that time in my spiritual development it was just what I needed to hear. Law is in Scripture to convict us and drive us to the Gospel, but the rest of Scripture is there for our comfort. If we take one of these "deep truths" of the Bible and turn it around so many times that it is leading us away from God or causing us concern about our faith then we are misusing it. So as we dig into free will and predestination this week, remember that these concepts are for our comfort! Please don't take my words or the words of Scripture any other way!

May the Lord of comfort and blessing be with you today! Rudy

Free Will 101 If we are going to talk about man's will and how free it is to act, we first have to define at what stage in man's existence that we are talking about. Our choices are: 1. Before the fall; 2. After the fall, 3. After rebirth in Christ, and 4. After the resurrection of the flesh. Today it's number 2. So what I'm talking about applies to each one of us before we had the regeneration that comes through rebirth in Christ. For now I will call this person "natural man." "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14 So in spiritual matters the mind of the natural man cannot understand or discern anything. In fact, the only thing he can do is be hostile to God. "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God." Romans 8:7-8 Therefore, the natural man is not able to claim anything for himself. "Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God." 2 Corinthians 3:5 You see, if we as natural man were able to do anything, even participate one little bit in our salvation, then it becomes works and not grace. It is wholly by the grace of God that we who are dead in trespasses and sins are made alive again through the blood of the Lamb of God, His One and only Son. God does this through His Word and Sacraments. His Holy Spirit is present whenever you share His Word. And it is the hearing of that Word that produces the faith that is the sole path to salvation: Faith and trust in Jesus as our own personal Lord and Savior. At that point we become a category 3 person; a "spiritual man" instead of a "natural man." We are born again! More on that tomorrow. Praise be to God who called me out of darkness into His wonderful Light! Rudy

Free Will 102"The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being." Genesis 2:7 This act of creation sets us apart from every other living being. We were given at creation the very breath of God; His Spirit gave birth to our spirit. This is one aspect of how we were created in the image of God; we were three parts: body, soul (our personality), and spirit. In Hebrews 4:12 we are told that the "Word of God is living and active, ... it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit." And in Luke 23:46 Jesus doesn't commit His soul to the Father, rather "into your hands I commit my spirit." In the "natural man," it is this spirit of ours that is dead in trespasses and sin. And it is this spirit that is reborn through baptism and faith in Jesus and makes us a new creation.

And it is this reborn spirit within us that gives us the ability to participate with God after we have been become believers. John records Jesus' words to the church of believers at Laodicea in Revelation 3:20, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hear my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me." For me, it is very significant that Jesus says this to the church. We have the ability, after we have been regenerated, to reject Jesus. We can choose to not open the door. Why? Because, God chooses to work this way. He could make us robots, but He doesn't. He desires our willing participation in the work that he has prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10) It is through this response to the Spirit of God that knocks at the door of our spirits that creates in us the desire of our heart. It is through this communion that we will "walk," "run," and "soar." (Isaiah 41:31) Praise God for the freedom that He has given us in Jesus. We were once dead, but we are now alive!

Live for Christ, today and everyday!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

PredestinationI guess the first question is, Why? Why should we even spend time talking about this confusing topic? I like what one commentary said: "One must not bypass or reject a teaching of the divine word because some people misuse and misunderstand it; on the contrary, precisely in order to avert such misuse and misunderstanding, we must set forth the correct meaning on the basis of Scripture." (1) Not that I have all the answers. I just know that God did not write certain parts of the Bible to be used and understood only by those who go to Seminary. The whole Word of God is for us -- all of us. So in the next few days we will attempt to make this concept clear. As always, please send along your comments!

So to begin, let us look at Romans. First 8:29: "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." Now as we try to understand this concept, I want you to think of the following verses as "cousins" to the one above. "If God is for us, who can be against us." 8:31 and "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." 8:38 These all illustrate one thing that predestination is: The concept that God is true to us. "He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful." 1 Corinthians 1:8-9 So, after God has called us and "begun the good work in us" he will also continue it to the end and complete it, if we ourselves do not turn away from him but "hold fast until the end the substance which has been begun" in us. For such constancy he has promised his grace. (2) It is a comfort to me that God is faithful and true to me! To be continued...

May He who has begun this good work in you be faithful and bring it to completion!Rudy(1) Book of Concord, pg 617, para 8(2) Ibid, pg 621, para 32

The soothing warmth of predestination Think of the doctrine of predestination like it was the soothing warmth of a hot shower pouring over your shoulders. Predestination says that the very God that created the whole of the universe knew you by name from before the foundation of the world. Yes, you say, He knew everything because He's all-knowing. But predestination is different from foreknowledge. He knows the evil that happens in the world but He doesn't bless it and keep it. But for the ones He foreknew would become believers in His Son, He set up this wondrous chain of events. "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." Romans 8:30

Folks, this is not a verse to be used to damn people to hell! It is a verse for us to bask in its warmth and its comfort that we are known to the Creator and nothing apart from ourselves can snatch us out of His hand. This discussion always comes back to free will; that's why I started the week with those discussions. But at this point, I ask with Isaiah, "Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?'" 45:9b Instead of arguing with the Creator, we need to rejoice, "Yet, O Lord, you are our Father, We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand." 64:8 Mold me and make me, this is what I pray! Lord, thank you for knowing me even before you made the world, and, even knowing all my sins, choosing me to be included with your Son as one of your children. Keep Lord, from all harm and danger, and protect me, even as you have promised, from anything that might try to pull me away from you. Amen

May He mold you today to continue the mission that He has sent you on! Rudy

It Is TimeWhat an awesome week sits in front of us! Here in Colorado, we've just gone from drought to everything in the city shut down because of a foot or more of snow. We get to look forward to Thanksgiving Day when many of us will be reunited with loved ones. We get to begin the advent season and prepare our hearts for the coming of our Savior. But how about those that haven't heard of the glory of our Savior? What is Thanksgiving to them but just a day or two off of work? How can you give thanks without knowing who you are thanking? "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." 2 Corinthians 6:2 If there is one thing that my messages about predestination brought to me, it is the urgency; the need to share the Gospel - Now!

For how are people to know of this Jesus if we; you and me, don't tell them? How many of your fellow students/coworkers are going to sit at a Thanksgiving table that is empty of its true meaning? There is only one God. Many people try to fit something else into that hole that is in our hearts that is made just especially for Jesus. But you and I know that when Jesus comes home to live in our hearts that there is nothing better. Nothing better than the fit when Jesus fills that hole that only He can fill. Now is the time to share the love you have for that unchurched friend and tell them about Jesus. Just think how much better it would be if they truly knew the one that they were giving thanks to this Thanksgiving!

May the Giver of all good things give you the wisdom and words to share Him with others!Rudy

Noah's Excited Let me tell you about Noah's* excitement. For days he has been looking forward to Jason (his older brother in college) coming home for Thanksgiving. He was up early this morning saying that this is the day! that Jason is coming home. He knows that it will be past his bedtime when Jason finally gets here, so he has begged permission to be able to wake up to tell him Hi. This whole process reminded me of how last year I tried to figure out when each one of the students that were on my devotions list were going home for Thanksgiving and then I would shift my email to their homes instead of school. Well, this year it is impossible for me to keep track of who's going where; the list has really grown. But, of course, I know that God has the ability to know where each one of us is going, and His care and love and protection is much more important than my email routing.

"The Lord will keep you from all harm -- he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore." Psalm 121:7 We are His sheep, in His pasture. He knows us by name and knows where each one of us is going, doing, seeing, etc., etc. I know I take great comfort as Jason heads home that the Lord is in charge and not me. Please, Lord, protect all who travel this week to see friends and family. You are our great Shepherd. We know your voice and we follow You, Lord, above all others. Amen.

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ protect your coming and going both now and forevermore. Rudy* For those who may have recently joined us, Noah is my very active 5 year old, who, many times, provides me with interesting insight.

Sheep and the Goat Some of you may remember that I purchased two sheep and an old Billy Goat for the VBS petting zoo a while back. What I didn't expect were all the subtle insights that I would receive from caring for those animals. When I bought the sheep, the owner talked me into the goat so the sheep wouldn't be lonely. The fact is the sheep have bonded with this goat and follow it everywhere. All I have to do is put the goat on a leash and the sheep go wherever I lead the goat. The goat, however has allegiance to no one. Not me or the sheep. I guess as goats go he's a nice one, but he uses his horns to butt the sheep away from their food and I certainly wouldn't turn my back on him. In the Bible the goats are always representative of the bad guys. In Matthew 25 the sheep are put on the right hand of Jesus to prepare for glory while the goats are on the left to be sent to hell. In the old Testament tradition of the scapegoat, the goat was chosen to carry the sin of the people out into the desert most likely because he was dumb enough to run off into the desert by himself and not come back. "But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to be used for making atonement by sending it into the desert as a scapegoat." Leviticus 16:30 I think the message of all of this is that we should follow the Good Shepherd instead of the goats. But if we spend more time developing a relationship with the goats, we won't know the voice of our Good Shepherd, Jesus. Instead we'll choose to follow these dumb goats who will lead us right out into the desert of this world; a wasteland that will just gobble us up. It is important who we choose to keep as stable mates. Which is your best friend, the Good Shepherd or a bunch of goats?

May He who cares for you, become your best friend. Rudy

Thankful Hearts My Mom, (since the kids were born, we call her Granny) has been working through all the people of the family and making them crocheted afghans. She must be on the second time through because a month or so ago she gave me this nice warm lap quilt for the time I spend in my chair. It is very nice, and I promptly went home and started using it. A while later Granny asked me how I liked it and of course I told her, Great! Then she just mentioned that she didn't know since I hadn't said anything about it -- not even a Thank You. Man, did I feel like a heel. I had been using the quilt and really enjoying it and hadn't even told her so. Hadn't even taken time to say Thank You. It made me realize how little time we have in our lives to say, "Thank You." To Grannies, to friends, and especially to God. God has chosen to bless us with all kinds of great things, you know -- power tools and family, things like that; and we just go right ahead and use them and forget to give Thanks to the Giver. We in America have this wonderful day when we pause to tell our God how Thankful we are. But what about the other 364 days of the year. God doesn't forget to send His blessings our way, we shouldn't forget to Thank Him every other day of the year! For all we receive, it is our duty to thank and praise... "Let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe." Hebrews 12:28
Happy Thanksgiving!

May the Lord of our Bounty continue to bless you through out the coming year! Rudy

Take a Stand Have you ever had to take a stand? Yesterday, I was pondering the situation of Martin Luther, when he had to stand against the entire religious world of his day. What gave him that fortitude? Of course, in retrospect we know it was the Holy Spirit of God, using him to set that religious world straight. I doubt that any of us will ever be in that kind of spot; nonetheless standing firm is tough to do even with a little bit of pressure. Luther's famous words came to mind. "Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason ... my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right or safe. God help me. Amen" So, as I was thinking about those words, I wondered at the connection of our "conscience" and the reborn spirit within us. I came up with this verse where Paul is doing the same thing Luther did -- standing up to the religious leaders of the day. "Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, 'My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.'" Acts 23:1 Then in checking the Greek word study on this verse it says, "Thus conscience is the testimony of the Spirit in man's heart concerning his obligation to God." Of course, I picked quotes that back up my point which is to say; If your conscience is telling you something, LISTEN! Check it out carefully, especially with the Word of God. I believe what we call our "conscience" many times is that same "still small voice" of our God communicating with us. Listen carefully!
May the Lord direct your steps and give you the courage to stand firm! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

"A long way off" A few of us get together for a Bible study at UCCS on Mondays (at 12:20 for those who would like to join us). The discussion yesterday, focused around that unique time that college is in one's life and how some choose to use that time as a time to rebel. I think the discussion applies to all of us, because we all daily struggle with the temptation to try sin. We agreed that sin puts a barrier between us and God. Of course, it is that barrier that Jesus gave His life to remove. But we talked about a time when, even knowing it was wrong, we might have embraced sin and even bragged about that sin to other Christians. My thoughts went to the compassionate grace evidenced by the Father while He was waiting for the prodigal son to return. Jesus makes a point in the story to say, "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him." Luke 15:20 For the Father to see his son while he was "still a long way off," he had to have been watching for his return.

Our God is not pleased by our sin. But, He is waiting for our return. He is waiting for us to realize that life without Him is no better than wallowing with the pigs. He is waiting for us to turn from that sin and claim all the blessings that he has waiting for us. Each one of us struggle with the temptations of a lifestyle that looks glorious or fun. Sometimes we go too far -- stay gone too long. But the Father is waiting. Waiting for each of us to turn from our sin and say, "Daddy, can I come home?"

Praise be to the Father for Grace, and Thank you Jesus for delivering it! Rudy

To Teach and to be TaughtI received an email yesterday questioning the Biblical basis for teachers. Since at least some of you were copied on this response I thought I would take a crack at it today. For those who didn't get a copy, his first question was, "Where does the Bible say we can learn from man?" Just a few of the Biblical responses: As parents we are required to teach: "Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." Dt 11:19 The wise man keeps on learning: "Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning." Pro 9:9 Titus is commanded to teach: "You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine." Titus 2:1 We all are commanded to teach by Jesus, himself: "Go and make disciples ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Mat 28:19-20 Teaching has been appointed and commissioned by God: "And in the church God has appointed ... third teachers," 1 Cor 12:28 and "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach." Romans 12:6-7 And God tells us His purpose: "It was he who gave some to be ... pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Eph 4:11ff The Scripture teaches clearly that every one of us is to some measure a teacher. If Scripture says we are to teach, I will teach. Whether we can learn anything from man? the Proverbs verse makes it clear that we can. There will always be people in this world that each one of us can learn from and there will always be people that we can teach. This process will continue until the Lord calls us home. There are some wonderful verses on how the Holy Spirit teaches us directly, which I will cover tomorrow, if the Lord is willing!

May the Lord's peace be with you now and forevermore! Rudy

The Whole Enchilada! If Satan can get us to focus on something other than the mission of the church he thinks he's winning. The early (first three centuries) heresy of Gnosticism tried to say, among other things, that if you didn't have their "special revelation" about Christ that you couldn't be saved. So they went around teaching their brand of religion telling people that there was more than what the early church fathers had said there was. John wrote his later letters to combat this teaching. He says this in 1 John 2:27: "As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit -- just as it has taught you, remain in him." John is not ruling out human teachers because the Bible doesn't contradict itself (see yesterday's devo or Mt 28:20, 1Co 12:28, Eph 4:11, Col 3:16, 1Ti 4:11, 2Ti 2:2,24). He is saying that the Bible has everything in it that we need to know to inherit eternal life. Not only that, it is the only reliable truth.

The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit will never contradict the Word of God. If you have a "revelation" and it goes against the Word of God, it is not from the Holy Spirit. That's why, in this very same letter, John says "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." 1 John 4:1 Instead of supplanting human teachers, the 2:27 verse should allow us to study with many teachers and delve deeply into the Scriptures, discerning the Truth in God's Word for ourselves. It will make that Truth meaningful to our lives, not just some abstract writing. It gives us Life! by pointing to the object of our salvation Jesus Christ. Through His death and resurrection He claimed for us the gift of eternal Life. The Bible is the whole story; the whole enchilada!

May the Lord of us all go with you in His peace today! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Wings of the Dawn Noah and I are both excited. Noah is excited, as only a five year old can be, because we are going skiing today. I am excited because I woke with my spirit soaring. So I think it's time to just Praise the Lord. We'll use David's words, from Psalm 139, but they can be our own.

"If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you."

Lord, please take my moments and my days and let them be filled with endless Praise! May the Lord of your creation bless you today as you go about His work! Rudy

WillingnessAll of us are just fellow travelers, walking down the road of life, trying to get it right. I think that is why sometimes we identify with my little 5 year old Noah when he says the little cute things that we all wish we could say sometimes. Yesterday in church, after being told (for about the fifth time) that he needed to sit down and wait for church to be over, he said, "I just want to be alone!" He had developed an attitude. Many times, I know that I want to hang onto my attitude long after the original problem has gone away. Since Noah is five, he forgets his attitudes relatively quickly. We adults on the other hand can hang onto our attitudes for a lifetime.

A statement that Pastor Doug made in his sermon yesterday caught my attention. He said that repentance is a willingness to change our attitude. It happens often that I am willing to confess my sin to God but I am not willing to change my attitude towards the affected party -- or the whole world for that matter. Paul says in Acts 26:20 that one reason for his preaching was "that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds." The fact is that our repentance does change our outward actions towards other people. So when you repent to God ask yourself, as I am going to do from now on, are you willing to change the attitude that brought about the sin in the first place. Maybe the world will be able to notice when we are all sport'n new 'tudes!

May your attitude be a blessing to all those around you as the Father above continues to shower you with His blessings. Rudy

Devote"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Colossians 4:2,5-6 Have you every heard the saying, "there are no problems, just opportunities?" For instance, Noah's inability to control his temper has given me a wonderful opportunity to talk with his teacher, inquire about her sick husband, and ask her how her fat lip is (courtesy of Noah). Now, I must admit that I was not looking forward to the conversation. But all things considered, it went well.

How often, when faced with a problem situation, do we step back and take Paul's advice to "make the most of every opportunity?" By beginning with prayer and seasoned with the salt of the gospel and the grace that Jesus has already shown us, we can face tough opportunities in a different, much more God-pleasing way. I think it also helps us tremendously in the stress department. If we can shift the focus off of our problems and onto the work that God wants us to do; and do it all to His glory, then we are dealing with a potential win-win situation in every problem we face. And when, through prayer, we give up the outcome of every situation to God, the number of win-win outcomes is bound to increase. Then, don't forget to give God all the glory! We Praise you Most Holy Lord! Help us to season all our situations with Your Grace!

May His blessing rest on each of you today!Rudy

Final OutcomeI don't really care for basketball, unless of course, my son is playing. And Zachary (he's 17, and my number two son) was playing last night. So we spent three hours on the road, one way; two hours stuck in Denver grid lock, just to see him play. I felt they really played a good game, all though the coach didn't seem to agree. But, after all their effort, they lost in a 4 minute overtime. Now, if the overtime would have been three minutes, they would have won. Unfortunately, it doesn't work like that. You can't just say the game's over because you're ahead.

How about our salvation? Can we be assured of the outcome? Or is it possible that we might lose it in some sudden death overtime? I supposed these fears are what gave rise to the early church rite of "last rites." The idea that we have to be absolved of all our sin at the very last moment, so we could get through those pearly gates. I am so glad that God prompted Paul to spell it out for us. "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who have believed. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are freely justified by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood." Romans 3:22-25 "For we maintain that man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." Romans 3:28 At the very moment of faith we are blessed with the "sacrifice of atonement" that cleanses us for all time! Our eternal Life has already begun! Praise God for enabling us to believe in His Son as our Savior! Praise God for the blessed assurance of heaven! Praise God that we know the final outcome.

May the God of all Grace support you in the blessed assurance of heaven!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Present Sufferings Our bodies at certain times reveal the awesomeness of the Creator. They are so complex and intricate that we will never know all there is to know about them. At the same time, when they don't work right it can be an agonizing experience. A dear friend of mine* is struggling with a problem that the doctors seem to think has been caused by her own immune system going haywire and destroying her own red blood cells. When the body works right we see a glimpse of God's good creation; when it doesn't work, we see the effects of sin. Original sin, that which all mankind inherited from Adam, continues to run its terrible course through all of God's good creation. Paul tells us, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." Romans 8:22 It is very painful for us to watch as any of our loved ones has to endure the pain associated with the "groaning" of original sin.

The concept that Paul starts with in the same section is one that we all need to know and understand before suffering sets in. For instance, I would not now go quote it to my friend in the hospital bed. But for the rest of us, it is an important concept to know and understand. It says, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." Romans 8:18 No matter what crap we have to deal with in this earthly vale of tears, it will pale and disappear when we see the glory that has been prepared for us. That glory is simply being in the presence of our Creator and Redeemer without the presence of sin. How great that Glory will be!

May the Lord of all life be with you today and always! Rudy

Can you hear me? I was talking with Patra Sue last night on the telephone. For those who may not know her, she is our youth and family DCE at church. She asked me if I could hear her clearly. It seems that she had just gotten one of these high tech walk around phones that lets you go a ways from the base unit, and she was testing it out. Of course, it helps if you know Patra, but she was excited as I think only Patra could be about the new phone. It's funny how thoughts go, but the conversation got me thinking about how clearly we can hear God. I think we all yearn for some new techie toy that would allow us to hear the voice of God clearly, like over a phone line. Unfortunately, I think the Bible is pretty clear on the fact that until we see God face to face, the communication will remain blurred.

1 Corinthians 13:12 puts it this way. "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we will see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." The Kings James version says, "we see through a glass, darkly" and a literal interpretation could read, "we see through a mirror in obscurity." Whatever the interpretation, the point is we will not see clearly or know fully until we pass through this vale of tears and see God face to face. That's the purpose of faith. God has given us the gift of faith to get through the times when we can see His greater purpose only through a glass, darkly. I think we can still pray for the Holy Spirit to make our paths straight, and to fill us in on the grand design, but it won't ever be perfect. Faith will always play a role.

May God bless your decisions, and give you His wisdom and insight, and especially may he give you faith! Rudy

The Whale

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord." Psalm 150:6 Now let me ask you how can a whale Praise the Lord? You might say that only man has the rational reason to Praise God. But Psalm 148:7 says, "Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths." You might say that, of course, a creature like the mighty whale gives praise to God when we see it and acknowledge it's maker. But that exalts us. I tell you that the very existence of the whale gives praise to God without our acknowledgment or permission. So, once again, you might ask, why this esoteric discussion about praise?

Well, yesterday in church we had this wonderful Cantata put on by our choir with a 20+ piece orchestra and dancers. Yes, dancers. And afterward, and even before, I heard this mumbling about "dancing in church" or about "clapping in church" to give praise to the performers instead of God. Well, let me tell you, God was praised! And the choir and the dancers didn't require my permission or anyone else's permission for it to be Praise. And when we acknowledge the "vessel" and the excellence at which they do something, we give Praise to the Our God that created that vessel and gave them the talent to praise Him! But, I do really like Mike's comment in class when he ask if maybe we should start clapping for the sermon, or better yet, let's clap for communion! "Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and the lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord." Psalm 150:3-6

Join us, won't you? Rudy

Underlying filth Recently I was digging away with my backhoe on a little job and came up with some unexpected treasure. A septic system. Now it turned out that the system had been damaged during installation and was not functioning properly, so we were able to fix it while we had it uncovered and all turned out well. But it sure was nasty while we had it open. How in the world can such a beautiful yard have such underlying filth? Are there times our lives are like that? On the outside we look good. Our lives are going well, good friends; everything is a bed of roses. But, underneath there is a filth that would turn our stomachs if it were brought to light? Of course, all of constantly wage battle with sin and continually strive to do the good God commands of us. But the underlying filth of our sin doesn't need to stay inside of us.

We can daily (or minute by minute if needed) get rid of the filth through our repentance and lay all of those burdens on Christ. It was actually my client who came up with the analogy of Christ cleansing us from our filth, as we stood there looking at the open, clogged septic system flowing from his house. Filth, depravity, lustful desires; these are the things from which Christ has set us free. Peter tells us that "a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him." 2 Peter 2:19 Christ has come so that we need not be a slave to anything but HIM! Our blossoms and happiness in our lives can spring from the eternal Hope of all ages. We need not be tied to the desires of our old sinful nature. So do some digging of your own and see what you uncover. Then give it all up to the one who loves you more than life itself. Thank you, Jesus!

May the blessing of freedom in Christ be ever new for you, now and always! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Trust Fall?A few years back, when I was temporarily running our local church youth group, I was fortunate enough to get to join them in what they called a trust fall. First off, in my mind, those two words don't necessarily go together. Secondly, I'm well over 200 pounds, and most of my youth group was in the small and slender category. I really didn't know what to expect, but as the morning progressed, I got a glimpse of this platform over 8 feet up in the trees. My mind began to make up all kinds of excuses. But as the moment approached (I was last), I decided that if the Lord wanted me home today, that was OK with me. So, as the command was given to fall, I crossed my arms on my chest and fell backwards from this platform to the waiting arms of my youth group so far below me. It was wonderful. Mainly the part about trusting God with whether He wanted me home, but the catching part was pretty good, too. Sometimes, we ask God to get us to the next level of maturity, or understanding, or responsibility, and then when we're actually on the platform, needing to trust God, we decide: well maybe I didn't really want that just yet. God is so gracious, that He'll let us off that platform. But, just think how great it is when we actually trust God with the outcome. Then we can experience all that He has in store for us! "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life...Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." Matthew 6:25, 27, 33.

May the Lord of Love hold you in the palm of His hand!Rudy

"Shall become one" For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." Genesis 2:24 I am beginning to realize the true depth of this concept. After 21 years of marriage (today!) I am just beginning to see past the obvious. For one thing it means that she is going to be your best friend. Sure, you can have other friends, but none better. And it means that she'll put up with you not getting things done around the house a whole lot longer than she should. But recently, I have realize that it means that you would gladly put yourself in her place when she is hurting. That you would gladly endure her suffering, if it were possible, just to spare her the pain. It is this concept that has given me just a glimpse into the depth of love that Jesus had for us. And through His miraculous intervention, He was able to take away our pain. He was actually able to endure the death that should have rightly been ours. There is no greater love than this, that The Lord of the Universe would choose to lay down His life for my sins! Like I said -- just a glimpse. I don't think that I'll ever really be able to grasp the total concept. For now, it is enough for us to thank and praise Him. We owe Him our life; a debt that we can never repay. But we can offer Him our humble thanks. And await His coming this Christmas with renewed anticipation. May the Lord of our Salvation, be with you now and forevermore! Rudy

DetailsOver the next couple of weeks I will be writing a little less, maybe. One thing for sure, I will try to write on January 1, 2000, just to see if it is all working, you know, Y2K Bug and all. Please pray for all who are traveling and heading home for the season. One other detail, students, if I have a home email address I will be using that unless you tell me differently. If I don't have a home one, I'll just send them to the same one I've been using. Here's another thought: You know how the Holidays are the time for catching up with old friends via the every popular Christmas letter. Well, how about if all of you send me your Christmas letter. Then I can get to know some of you better! If you can send it electronically, just use my email address. If it's in the other form here's my address:

Rudy Bauer9620 Chipita Park RoadChipita Park, Colorado 80809

You can use that address for one other thing. I will be having a Y2K New Year's Eve party, starting at 9:00 PM on News Year's Eve and going through New Year's Day. All of you are invited!Here's the verse that's been floating around in my mind. I won't write about it, because I've used up the space with details (There's a devo all by itself). "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things." Philippians 4:8

May the Lord of All, who came to earth as a poor little baby, born in a manger, bless you with peace and happiness and the comfort of His Grace this Christmas!Rudy

"Be Very Careful" My youngest, Naomi, is going on three in a couple of months and is talking fairly clearly now. She might start taking Noah's place as the originator in the cute sayings department. Of course, one thing that I can't transmit via email is the tone that she uses, so you'll just have to imagine it. One that she has just come up with in the last few weeks is, "Pokemon's stupid." Now the interesting part about this is I don't ever remember having a discussion about how I felt about this latest toy craze that is sweeping the country. But, she has learned it nonetheless. The first application is, of course, for parents of small children. Your actions speak louder than your words. Much of your children's learning is "caught" in stead of being "taught."

But, I think there is a broader application. For every one of us that wants to share Jesus with our friends or others we don't even know, it still applies: Your actions speak louder than your words. It is sad, but there have been a number of times that in talking to unbelievers about Christ, their major hang up is with the way they have been treated by a Christian. Sure, that may just be an excuse and we Christians are forgiven, not perfect; but still, we need to realize we are witnessing for Jesus with every waking moment. "Be very careful, then how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:15 This is an especially good time of the year to "give an account of the hope that is within you!" Let the joy of the birth of your Savior speak volumes to those around you.

May the blessings of Jesus, our long anticipated Savior be with you and those around you this Christmas season! Rudy

Abundant LifeAs I was writing my Christmas letter last night, I just couldn't help but be overwhelmed with the gifts that my God has given me. Jesus says of himself: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10 KJV I will thank and praise Him with every fiber of my being! As I reviewed the pictures of my children that I included with my letter, I thought of another verse. "Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them." Psalm 127:3-5 This Christmas season I just want to tell it from the Mountain Tops. Our God is a great and glorious God! Brush off the puny arrows of the evil one this Christmas and give glory to the Giver of all good gifts. May your Christmas be so full of God's blessings that they flow over on everyone around you!Rudy

Personal TouchI know I've been slackin' off. It's so nice to have my son home from school, that I've just been enjoying the time. The one thing that I had forgotten, though is how much he eats! We'll go out to eat, fill up the tank to where I can't move. Then just two hours later, I'll find him in the kitchen fixing a before bed snack. I warned him that if he kept eating like that, by the time he's 40, he'll look like me. Anyway, news letters and emails and even phone calls are all good ways for us to keep in touch with our son when he's off at school. But, they pale in comparison with the personal touch of having him at home. And home for Christmas is even better.

Aren't we glad that God didn't just use the Internet to let us know about our salvation that had come into the world? He sent a personal touch, a heavenly host of angels! And when this world needed a Savior, He didn't just send a royal edict delivered by the heavenly postal service; He sent His only Son -- the most personal messenger that God had. Even then, Jesus didn't come in power and might, but in lowliness and poverty. And in just two days we will welcome Him into our home anew. To rediscover the wonder of a personal Savior, born a tiny little baby just for me and you. The most personal touch that the world has ever known was when "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 Won't you join me in welcoming the Savior of the world into your home this Christmas? It is a personal touch that will change your lives forever!

May the Babe of Bethlehem bless you with His personal touch this Christmas!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Call Ahead?"She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:7 Sometimes Joseph, just like all men, gets a bum wrap for not calling ahead and making the reservations for that very important night. I remember a time when we were just outside of Mt. Rushmore and we had decided not to make reservations for the night because we didn't want to be rushed in doing the touristy thing. So we ended up in the last room the little town had. Our first clue at how long the night was going to be came when we found bunk beds in the room. Needless to say I was the one who was in trouble. I would like to proposed to you that there is a life style choice at these very crucial moments in one's life. You can either get all bummed out about it or you can make the choice that you will not let it affect you. You can look for the good that God may want you to do in a less than desirable situation. By the way, about the only good we found to do at the place outside of Mt Rushmore was to pray against all the arcane symbols that were painted above each one of the room doors.

So here's the choice: Call ahead or go with the flow. Personally, (don't tell my wife this) but I think there are times to do both. But when, like in Joseph's case, you can't find the 800 number for the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce, then you trust God and go with the flow. You never know, He might be telling some shepherds to come and see you in the stable, and if you go getting a room, you'll blow the whole deal! Even when God says that the Savior of the entire world is going to have to be born in a barn, you trust Him. Because He's in charge! He is the one in control. When we think anything else, we're just foolin' ourselves.

May our Newborn Savior King find a place in your heart this Christmas!Rudy

Day after Day Yesterday morning, as I was dressing Noah for church, he asked me why this day had to be just a "normal day." So, of course, I get on my philosophical hat and start telling him how Sunday is a really special day and we get to praise God, and all kinds of neat things like that. Finally he interrupts me and says that's not what he meant. He meant why weren't we going to have another "present day" like Christmas Day. Then what he really wanted to know was when the next "present day" was going to be. I guess we all kind of long for Christmas to last. That's probably where the twelve days of Christmas came from. I guess today would be "three French hens." But, if I had to keep giving presents out for twelve days, I know someone who would be in the poor house.

But not God. His blessings are new each day. He is truly the giver that keeps on giving and giving. "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the lamb!" Revelation 19:9 Each Christmas I am amazed all over again at how the Lord of the Universe humbled Himself to be born into the pitiful state of humanity. All because He loves us so much that He was willing to pay the price that we could not pay. Had no hope of ever paying. But He paid it in full and now we are invited to the victory celebration! And the blessings rain down day after day. Praise God for His humble birth! Praise God for His victorious death and resurrection! And praise God for our invitation to the feast! May you bask in the blessings of the Most High God! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Happy New Year!"For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night." Psalm 90:4 I think that there is a song that paraphrases this verse, something like "A Thousand Years are but like an evening gone by." Well, we spent a relaxing evening here as we passed into the year 2000 (I won't get into it with all you AR types on whether it's a new millennium or not!) Most of our crowd at our party last night, when asked what the most significant event of the past 1000 years was, said something to do with the Reformation. But, of course, we were all Lutherans. But to God the evening we shared last night was just a brief as the past millennium. With that concept of time, who knows how long before the second coming of Christ will be.

So should we rest on our laurels? Should we eat, drink and be merry? Well, yes, we probably should eat, drink and be merry, but I don't think resting is in the picture. The Bible is clear why we have the time, even though the answer was given in the first century. "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9 So this time, no matter how long it continues, needs to be used to spread the good news of the salvation of our Lord. For you see it is "good news"! Even better than the news that the Y2K Bug was a non-event! For it means the difference between an eternity separated from God or an eternity with Him for you and all your friends. Spend the time you have well. Share the "good news" with your closest friends. You sure don't want to have to explain later to them why you left them out!

May the Lord bless your New Year with happiness, health and much time to share His story! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Patchwork Recently, my dear wife, Dena, decided that it was time to finish the ceiling in our living room. Now from my perspective, I hadn't gotten it done in nine years, so I didn't see the real rush. But, she put a little pressure in just the right spots, so I began to see things from her perspective a little more clearly. So we got the drywall hung and then came the most exciting part of the job. Taping. For you who have never taped drywall, say a little pray of thanks right now. For you who have, you know that it is a most frustrating job. And unless you do it day in and day out, I don't think you can get enough skill to get it right. But, I did a reasonable job, and we entered the Christmas season of 1999 with a finished ceiling.

I have decided that we are all in the patchwork business. Now I'm not talking about drywall, but something very similar in it's difficulty to get it just right. I am talking about the business of patching up relationships. In this painful and sin filled world, there will always be work to put patches back on a relationship that has been damaged. We may not see the need at first, because many times the holes have been there for years. We've gotten used to dysfunctional relationships, and too often are willing to just let them stay that way. Aren't you glad that we have a God you wasn't willing to leave our relationship with Him in the sorry state of the way it was? "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 So now that God has patched us up, He has told us to go get busy patching up the hurts of this world. Many times the hurts we ourselves have caused. But also, many times the hurts that are just there and desperately need a skilled craftsman; one who practices his craft everyday, to put a good patch, bound tightly with love on the hurt of a friend.

May you practice the craft of relationship building and patching, using the Love that Christ first showed to us! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
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And your drawings:

Magic TuesdayThe only name I can think of for what happens around here on Tuesdays is "Magic." You see, as if by magic, my closet is transformed on Tuesdays. All of a sudden, all my dirty laundry shows up all clean and folded on my shelves in my closet! I never run out of underwear to wear because of Magic Tuesdays! I always have clean socks to wear on Magic Tuesdays, too. Even my shirts show up, clean and neatly hung up on Magic Tuesdays. There is one problem though on this day. Sometimes the nice shirts I own, you know, the ones that have to be ironed, don't seem to make it into my closet on Magic Tuesday. I wonder who I could complain to about that little "hang up" in my Magic Closet?

Honestly Folks, I do know who is responsible for my closet all of a sudden being filled with clean clothes. And sometimes I even remember to thank her. But I can't help drawing a parallel between my wonderful wife's laundry skills and the blessings that God sends us every day. "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." Matthew 6:45 God's blessings shower down on all of us each and every day. Without Him none of us would even eat or breath for that matter. But how often do we pause to thank Him? Even worse, how often do we even credit Him with the miracle of life; each and every day of it? At the beginning of this new year, let us praise the Giver of all good gifts! And let us not waste our time complaining about his tardiness about filling our needs. He loves us more than we even love ourselves! Amazing!

May the Lord of all bless you with abundance and happiness this New Year!Rudy

Separation Have you ever noticed that when you think you have done something to hurt someone else or done something that they might not approve of, that you try to avoid that person? I think that this happens even when the other person might not even be aware of your actions. It's just more comfortable to stay away from that person, because even seeing them reminds you of the thing you've done that you think they may not like. Maybe it's even a good friend, and deep down in your heart you would even sacrifice the friendship before you would admit to them that your actions are something they might not approve of.

I know we do this whole mind game with God. I think all of us would admit that our sin separates us from God. What I don't think we would all agree on is that the separation primarily comes from our side. Yes, of course, God hates sin. "The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong." Psalm 5:5 Unrepented sin stands as a barrier between us and God and continues to separate us from Him. But, once we have turned from that sin and admitted that it is wrong, it is no longer a reason for separation. "He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:10-12 But, many times, that's the point that we have to hold on to our sin and keep the separation there. Then the separation is 100% our fault. Because God loves us so much that he sent His Son to pay the price for that sin. To remove the separation from between us and Him. If we insist on holding onto it, we are limiting the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. Instead, we need to crawl into the loving arms of the Father. For where there is Jesus, there is no separation!

May you recognize that the loving arms of the Father are wide open to you! Rudy

The Odds are Irrelevant Yield 2 King Jesus. That saying was a cute little thing that I noticed on a bumper sticker on the eve of Y2K. It summarizes the Sovereignty of God and how we are to act towards the Almighty Creator of the Universe. At the same time, people (all of us) have a really hard time with the term "Yield." It is right up there with "submit." We really like our control. Even when we "commit to the Lord whatever we do" so that "your plans will succeed," (Proverbs 16:3) we still want to be in charge. We want to do it our way. I think that we have several examples that tell us that this kind of control really gets in the way. One we all know is the story of the Battle of Jericho recorded in Joshua 6:1-25. Who ever heard of this stupid military strategy of marching around the city for 7 days and then yelling as loud as one could? Obviously, God wanted the people to know that if they were going to win any battles, it was because the Lord was doing the fighting, not because of their own strength.

This is not just a cute little story for the kids. It applies to the everyday struggles of our life; right here, right now! If we give the control over to God, and the glory for the victory, the odds against us are irrelevant. However, if we are looking for the control or the glory; LOOK OUT! It just won't work. No matter how big our army, no matter how magnanimous our intentions. Well, OK, it's still up to God; I know He works through sinners everyday. But the point is, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8:31 If God is calling you to great things, but in terms of the world's perspective they are just tooooooo big, don't worry. Give Him the control and the Glory and see where it goes. We certainly cannot conceive what the Lord has in store for us. So let him have the reins.

May the Lord of All bless you and yours and give light to your plans and success in all He has called you to do! Rudy

Less is More"The Lord said to Gideon, 'You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back.'" Judges 7:2-3 22,000 men went home! But there was still too many men, so God sifted them again and finally asked Gideon to fight the battle with only 300 men. As with yesterday's reference to the Battle at Jericho, this is not a story that is dead and has no meaning for us today. God's wisdom is foolishness to this world. But it is the way that God allows us to show that we trust Him and not our own wisdom and strength. In fact, when we rely on the wisdom of this world and try and do God's work, I think we look foolish to God!

So, how are we to apply this to our lives today? When God speaks to you, don't immediately start sifting it through all kinds of worldly filters as to why it won't work. Sift it through the Bible. Hold it up against the Word of God. Then maybe share it with a few trusted Christian friends, however, it is this step that often derails God's work. Just because you feel led to do something for the Lord, your friends might not share the same leading. It is important to pray. Then pray some more. Then pray with your friends. Then along with Peter, there comes the time for every one of us when God beckons for us to step out of the boat and into the stormy seas. It is a trust thing. If our trust is in the Lord it is never misplaced! If our trust is in the world or it's wisdom, we will sink most of the time. "Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." Hebrews 10:23

Go and serve the Lord, for He will guide you and bless you! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

"Matters of the Heart" I know sometimes my memory (or lack thereof) is the brunt of many jokes, but I do remember what it was like to be young and in love. Many of you on this list are in that stage of life where you are searching for a partner that will spend the rest of their life, for better or worse, with you. I have specifically not written about this topic, because I agree with the great theologian, Bill Cosby (remember, he gave the great Noah/God reenactment). Anyway, it was always Bill's advice that you have to handle "matters of the heart" on your own. He would not give counsel concerning a rocky relationship. In most cases, I agree with him. Many times I have seen the counsel given by people in those circumstances, and believe me, you don't want it.

There is One, however, who will listen carefully and guide faithfully. You can share your inmost pain and joy with Him and He won't even let it slip to your closest friend. And He guides! I can say this looking at it from the benefit of the backside of time. Believe me, God does guide you when it comes to "matters of the heart." In fact, it is perhaps God who most understands the intense pain that can come with a broken relationship. He has loved each one of us with a pure and honest love only to have that relationship shattered by our unfaithfulness. God understands love and He knows how to heal broken relationships. He paid the ultimate price to put our relationship back together. He can and will help you with your relationships. "Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you." Psalm 55:22

May the Lord listen to your inmost hurts, and may He give you peace! Rudy

Defining the Line Sometimes, for me anyway, it helps for me to get a real good idea of what a particular sin is. Not in an experiential way, but in the way of a definition. I think this is what Jesus did when He told people that what they thought was the definition of a sin was, was indeed too narrow of a definition. In Matthew 5:27 and following he says, "You have heard it said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." So all Jesus really did was tell us that the very thought of adultery is the sin. So I am still seeking to really define the line.

A verse that at least helped me understand what Jesus intended when He said "looks at a woman lustfully" is when He used the very same word only in a positive sense instead of a negative sense. In Matthew 13:17 Jesus says, "For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it." The "lust after" of 5:27 is the same Greek word as "desire," translated as "longed to see" in 13:17. At least in the words that Jesus was using, the concept of longing for could be either good or bad. In one case longing to see God was good but in the other desiring the woman was bad. One might say that we should strive to stay away, far away, from the bad line. However, I realize that we still have to live in this world. It would be kind of impolite to carry on all our conversations with women while looking in the opposite direction. I do think that we can control our thoughts to exclude the "desire" part with God's help. I also realize that for most, at least the people that I have talked with, that it is a consent struggle. One which God wants us to continue. The struggle, that is. He will help give us the mastery!

May the Creator of all beautiful things allow you to Glorify Him with your thoughts! Rudy

Welcomed Rest Have you ever had a bad day? How about a day that no matter how hard you tried, your best just didn't seem good enough? I really felt sorry for my son, Zachary (17) last night, because his basketball team was having a bad day. And all the coach could do was yell at them for it. Unfortunately, I was sitting behind the team in the bleachers, so I could hear most of the yelling. I suppose if I would have had to deal with that as a 17 year old maybe I would be a better person somehow. Maybe I would be better able to deal with some of the yellers in the real world. But last night I just wished that there was a coach that could motivate without destroying. Then came the deadly locker room talk where the coach said nothing. No words of encouragement or healing. Just nothing. I saw some crushed faces coming out of that locker room.

We all have those days. The world beats us up. There doesn't seem to be anyone that is there to take our side in a matter. Or no matter how hard we try we aren't even good enough for ourselves. Jesus came into this hurting world for each one of us. He is there even when the rest of the world is harsh, cold, and cruel. It is for days like these that he gives us words that are comforting and reassuring. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30 Some days I just long for that rest; the rest that only God can give. If the world has yelled at you and offered no words of comfort, join my son and I in climbing into a welcomed rest.

May the rest offered by our loving Savior be yours today! Rudy

Break In Lately at our church we have had several break ins. During the one a week ago they didn't get much because, after coming in an office window, they walked out into the hall, which set off the alarm. But they learned from their mistake and came two nights ago and just broke into offices through the outside windows and never went into the hall way. So they had time to search for their loot without being run off by the alarm. I know Satan uses the same old tricks to break in and destroy that he has through out history, however, I believe he is smart enough to vary his tactics. This keeps us off our guard while he has time to rifle through our life and make a real mess of things. If we had been at our church in the wee hours of the day and saw someone crawling in a busted window, chances are we would have known something was amiss. If we step back and look at our lives chances are we can detect the places where Satan is working on us. Jesus says, "I am the gate, whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." John 10:9-10 When we mess around with all the crap that Satan tries to use to break into our lives, we are missing out on the good life; the full life that Jesus has to offer. Jesus is the front door. As a matter of fact, He is the only door. Why waste time on trying to crawl in through a busted window? Trust me, you'll just end up getting all cut up. May the Way, the Truth and the Life be and abide with you now and always! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Get A Clue"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" Jeremiah 29:11 "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will." Ephesians 1:11 "In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps." Proverbs 16:9 And while we are in Proverbs: "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." Proverbs 19:21 "Instead you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'" James 4:15

Take a deep breath. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" Ephesians 2:10 "For in him we live and move and have our being." Acts 17:28 Are you getting a clue? "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:1-2 Dear Lord, I know that you are in Charge! but, sometimes Lord my sinful nature wants to take that control away from you. Please Lord, forgive me. Please allow me to see clearly the path that you have marked out for me, and let me run with strength from you, with eyes of faith and trust for you Lord and not for myself. Thank you Lord, for your patience with me.

Now may the Lord make His plans that he has for you clear, and may He lead you along straight paths! Rudy

The Ski Lesson Our family got to join the Jr High Youth ski trip over this past holiday weekend, so the fateful day finally arrived. The day that I would get to give Noah his first ski lesson. The day started out poorly. (Kind of an understatement.) After just one run down the bunny slope, Noah already wanted to go in and rest, which of course I thought was an answer to prayer. So, I took the opportunity to take a few runs with my other children. First Hannah, whose is 8 and has been skiing several times. Of course, I taught her how to ski, and I was proud to see that she was incorporating the things that I had taught her and was progressing nicely. So nicely, that I thought she could join her mother and ski the big hill, which they did and had a great time.

Then I talked the older boys, Zachary (17) and Aaron (15) into taking a run with the old man. Of course, I had all kinds of excuses, but they still had to keep stopping and waiting for me. It was fun, but I didn't want to hold them back, so I cut them loose to enjoy the rest of the day without their anchor. So early afternoon brings me back to Noah. He had forgotten most of the morning run and decided that he wanted to try it again. And I had gained a new perspective. It is my job as father to teach my children what they need to know about skiing, faith and life. I was blessed to see the results of past successes when I got to ski with my older children and realize that they had built upon the initial lessons that I had given them and were progressing nicely. But if I were to stop with Noah where we had left off that morning, I would be screwing up my fatherly role big time. So we tried it again, with a much larger dose of patience from above. And Noah actually had fun. After about 6 or 7 runs he even started to get the hang of it.

As parents, we can't always control all the life lessons that our children get. And we may have to ask for help every once in a while, but that doesn't alleviate the responsibility that God has given to us. "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." Proverbs 22:6 We must be faithful even when it seems like the progress is nonexistent. And I know all you "not yet parents" out there are asking what this has to do with you. I think all of us can and are on both sides of this relationship much of the time. And it helps to keep sight of the successes that God has given us when the going gets tough.

May the Lord bless your coming in and your going out, now and forevermore! Rudy

It's time to write, Lord. Sometimes I sit at my computer in the morning and tell God that I need His direction. Isn't that just so human of me? God's time is not our time and I'm just sure He gets a giggle out of it. Think of all of those old testament people just waiting around for their Savior. They were surely saying, "Come, Lord, come quickly." We have the better end of that bargain! The mystery has been revealed and we get to live with the sure and certain knowledge of our Savior. "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." 1 John 5:11

I know there are times in all of our lives when we think God isn't acting in a timely fashion. If we could just be in charge, we could get a little bit more done, right? We could focus on poverty one day and just get it all taken care of. Then maybe the next day we could get rid of war. Well, guess what. We are in charge! God chooses to work through each one of us to accomplish His goals on this earth. He even tells us, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask -- we know that we have what we asked of him." 1 John 5:14 So I ask you, what will you work on today? Poverty? War? Or maybe we have to focus on our homework or making a buck today and just leave those things till tomorrow? I know we all get sidetracked sometimes, but we don't have to stay that way. Right?

May the Father bless you with the knowledge of the work He has in store for you! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

Willing to get stomped on We had an interesting discussion yesterday in our little Bible class that meets at UCCS. We talked about friendship and how ones relationships get better with your own level of maturity. For instance, we talked about how another person can usually tell if you are not sincere; not willing to be a true friend, but one that will bolt at the first sign of trouble. So one mark of a true friend is someone that is willing to get stomped on and not let it ruin the friendship. There are times in every relationship that are rocky. And if we are going to just toss the friendship in the garbage at the first sign of trouble, then the friendship is shallow indeed. Proverbs sums it up this way: "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." (27:6)

Jesus is our very best friend. He has taught us how to be a friend. I remember when in third grade, singing "What a friend we have in Jesus" that I first realized that Jesus was truly a friend that would not run away from me even when I wasn't the best friend to have. Even when I wasn't the most popular at school, or the best at baseball. I do know at that time my relationship with Jesus changed from just a head knowledge to a true relationship in my heart. When we make a friend we should realize that Jesus is the model for that friendship, and we should be willing to hold on through the good times and the not so good times. We should be willing to get stomped on.

May the Jesus that gave His very life for you, give you the strength to be a true friend. Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
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And your drawings:

A Foothold Most of us are probably familiar with the whole anger/foothold thing in Ephesians. And I am sure that there is someone out there that doesn't ever get angry. But, for all the rest of us, I think that it is prudent every once in a while to revisit the words that God has given us concerning anger and how it really is a doorway, that when left open can let in all kind of bad things.

Through my college years, I spent my summers as a YMCA camp counselor. I guess it was a compliment, but whenever there was a particularly tough kid coming in, I ended up with him. Some were even sent to camp in lieu of there counseling or therapy. Now, of course this was too sensitive of information to share with an untrained counselor, so I had to find out the hard way. It was in this setting that I first learned that God, when asked in prayer, would actually turn away my anger. One time I remember I felt the volcano inside about to erupt, and I knew all the consequences of those eruptions. I went into the bathroom, close the stall door and prayed with all my might that God would not let me loose my temper right then. I even told Him that if it had to happen, maybe we could reschedule it for later that evening. He was faithful to His promises and that episode passed without an eruption then or later that evening. And I had found a new tool in anger management!

Most of us can quote the Ephesians 4:26 verse that says, "In your anger do not sin." But did you know that the writer is quoting Psalms 4:4 where we also get these words, "Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord will hear when I call to him."! He promises to hear us and help us with our anger! The Ephesians verse continues, "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold," (verse 27) We are warned that the devil can get ahold of us when we are angry. That should be scary enough to avoid those situations. The old advice that my Mommy used to give to count to ten, is still good advice. But while you're counting; pray! "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7

May the Lord set you free from anything that might entangle you, and bless you in His work! Rudy

The Fourth Amigo(The characters in this story are fictitious. Any resemblance to real people is just your imagination.)You see there were these three friends. Their friendship began when their Moms had even given birth to them in the same hospital. As young boys, they did everything together. They learned how to swim together. They went trick or treating together. They went on their first dates together. There was almost a threat to their friendship when in High school they all liked the same girl. Right then they decided no one would ever break up their friendship! They had been friends since childhood, and they would remain friends forever. They got older, got married, had kids, but they still remained friends; still bowled together, still went out drinking every Friday night together. Nothing was going to break up their friendship!

One day, one of them, we'll call him Joe, met a new friend and wanted to introduce him to his other friends. Joe had met this new friend at his work, and his life had started to change. You see, his new friend's name was Jesus. He tried his best to share this new friendship with his old buddies. But his old friends didn't look at Joe the same anymore. Joe just didn't get into the Friday nights out like he used to. He kept trying to tell them about a new friend that he wanted his buddies to get to know. Joe was even trying to tell them that they had been mean when they were growing up by not letting anyone else into their little group. Both of the other guys had promised that there was nothing that would ever break up their friendship, but Joe was starting to turn away from them. First he missed a bowling night. Then he had the audacity one Friday night to show up with his wife! The lifelong friendship was definitely in trouble. How could Joe be so stupid? He was risking a lifetime commitment; all for this new friend named Jesus. Joe's friends, his lifelong buddies, decided they had to rescue Joe. (To be continued...)

Jesus said, "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division." Luke 12:52

May God give you wisdom and discernment in your earthly affairs.Rudy

The Hook(As with yesterdays writing, I am making this up, REALLY!, this isn't real, but it could be.)Joe and his two buddies had practically been friends from birth. Now Joe felt like he had really blown it. He wanted to tell his friends how much this new relationship with Jesus meant to him. He wanted to tell them how much he had changed on the inside. Why was this so painful? He was sitting at their regular table for bowling, the same place they had sat every Wednesday night for as long as he could remember, and both his friends were late. Maybe they weren't coming. He had really torqued them off last Friday when he had brought his wife to their party night. Maybe they had decided they were through with him. Joe didn't know if he could stand it. Would this Jesus expect him to crap on his very best friends? Then he looked up from the table and saw them walking through the door. He was relieved and anxious at the same time.

"Hey guys, I thought you weren't coming!" Joe said. As they joined Joe at the table they looked him straight in the eye, and both of them had that smile. The same smile he remembered from high school, when they had cooked up something really fun for the weekend. It usually included women. Joe's heart sunk as one of his buds looked at him and said. "Guess who we ran into, Joe?" Joe just raised an eyebrow, he didn't trust himself to speak right then. "We ran into Joy." If Joe's heart could go any father down, it did. Joy had been his last girlfriend before he got married. He had never really gotten over her, never really forgotten her. "Guess what Joe." Again the eyebrow. "She's coming off of a really bad relationship, Joe, and she really needs to talk to someone who will understand. You know what Joe, she may even need your Jesus. Come on, let's go see her. She's right across the street at the Motel 8. Joe she needs you!"

"The Lord said to Cain, '...sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.'" Genesis 4:7
May the Lord bless you and keep you strong!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

The Test(Continued from yesterday; remember, it's just a story.)Joe looked at his two life long friends and realized they weren't joking. Somehow, they really had found his old girlfriend and stashed her across the street. Ever since he had "found Jesus" his life was turning upside down. His wife had been telling him about Jesus for years and he really had been able to ignore her pretty well. But when another coworker had told him about his best friend, it had hit Joe hard. It seemed to be just what his life was missing. And since he gave in, he had really begun to enjoy the time with his wife at church. But the rest of his life, including his friendship with his two life long buds, had become a shambles. And now they had gotten the "love that got away" and brought her back to him.

"What are you guys trying to do? You can't drag a poor innocent babe like Joy into this!" Joe said as he looked across the table at two smirking faces. Then something hit him. He remembered that smirk from when these guys had been trying to get him to take a dare in college. He realized deep down somewhere in his heart that these guys weren't really his friends. If they were, they wouldn't be trying to manipulate him like this. So he took a leap of faith. While looking straight at his friends, he silently prayed, "Jesus, please help me." And for the first time in his life those words were really a prayer, not just something to say. He didn't know what he expected to happen, but what did happen surprised him. He simply knew in his heart that these guys didn't care about Joy or him. And he knew what to do. "What room is she in?" There smirks got a little bigger as they handed him a key. "You guys take off, I handle this." Joe said. As Joe's friends walked out of the bowling alley slapping themselves on the back, Joe punched in his home number on the cell phone. When his wife answered the phone, Joe said, "Honey, I need you to come to the bowling alley. I need you to help me share Jesus with an old friend."

"And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

May the God who gives us strength, be and abide with you now and forever! Amen!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
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And your drawings:

Imitate Many of you know Matt, my good buddy. For those of you who don't know Matt, let me just share one thing about him. He has a passion; fly fishing. Anyone who would stand in an icy river for hours on end and wave a stick in the air must be motivated by a passion. So I hired Matt to come up and teach fly fishing at our last family camp out. It work out well for young and old alike, because Matt was able to share his love for the sport and communicate his enthusiasm. People learned how to fly fish and they had a good time doing it. I think we would all agree, if we are going to learn anything new, we usually look for someone who is already good at it and ask them to teach us. When we imitate them, we learn how to do whatever it is we are trying to learn.

So when I began pondering how to teach people to be a friend, a true friend, to someone else, I felt it was necessary to turn to the best teacher on friendship that we have. That's why in the last three devos, I made up this story about Joe. Someone who thought he knew friendship through his two buddies that he had grown up with. But when he met Jesus, he began to realize that true friendship looks a whole lot different that the friendship the world holds out to be the model. So as I begin to look at the elements of true friendship, we look to Jesus who is our model and from which all true friendships have their beginning. Jesus says to us: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last." John 15:13-16

May your Best Friend be with you today, and bless you in every way. Rudy

Friendship 101 "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." Proverbs 17:17 In talking about what a friend is and isn't in our Thursday Bible study at UCCS last week, we tried to get our arms around what "two-faced" meant. Someone suggested that if someone said something to your face but then said or did something else when you weren't around that they were two faced. I think it comes down to loyalty. And, when I think of loyalty, I think of my dog that I had in high school; her name was Holly. That dog didn't care if I had made the football team or if no one thought I was "cool." (I know, that word dates me.) But that dog always was truly happy to see me; never ran away from me on walks; and seemed to know when it was necessary just to sit beside me and not say anything. To be a true friend to someone you have to hang in there even when it's not the popular thing to do. Even when the road might get a little rocky. Look at our example. Jesus had to pay a price for our sin; a price that we could never pay. He didn't show "two faces" when it came to the moment of truth. The moment when all of creation would have been lost if He would have just called upon His Father for reinforcements. Instead, He was our truest of friends and stood in our place. So maybe the saying should be something like "When the going gets tough, you get to prove how good of a friend you really are." Remember one more thing. When Christ died for us, we didn't deserve it. So don't ever base your loyalty to a friend on what they deserve. Thank God that He didn't give us what we deserved! May the Lord of all show you how to be a loyal and true friend. Rudy

Blind-sided Let me tell you this little story from a few years ago in my life. It was when I was much less mature. (Yea, Right!) Well, anyway it was a stupid thing to do. I was attending a class on Sunday Mornings led by one of my friends. In class one Sunday, he and I disagreed on some minor theological point. So I was going to show him. During the week, I went away and did the research to back up my side of the issue and wrote a letter to the class detailing my side. Then the next Sunday, sitting there in class I asked my friend if I could pass something out to the class, and proceeded to pass out this letter. Blind-sided. This is about as low as you can go in the world of friendships. As a matter of fact, I think I'll apologize again to him today for that uncaring act. Yes, he's still my friend, which attests to the strength of HIS character.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 8:1 that "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God." You see, it's not how much we know, but rather how much we love. Whatever you are saying to a friend, if it is not motivated by love, it is the wrong thing to say. In my lifetime, I have been blessed to have had wonderful friends around me that didn't cut me down when they had every right to. But rather loved me enough to help me through the difficult passages of life. I only pray that I can have an ounce of that wisdom, when the need for it comes. And a whole lot of forgiveness from all my friends for all the times I screw up.

May the Lord of love, who gently molds and shape each one of us, move you toward the person He wants you to be!

Rudy

The Horsey Story I love to tell stories, especially when the end result glorifies God. Unfortunately, many times they show just how stupid I can be at times. A good friend of mine came up to ride horses one day many years ago. Even though it was windy, we decided to ride anyway. We had just gotten out of the corral and were even with my hay pile, that was covered with a tarp when a strong gust of wind decided to come our way. The old tarp on the hay just started a flappin', and just when I thought, "I wonder if that will bother the horses?", my horse spooked. I really think this particular horse just used spooking as an excuse to get really carried away. She really got into the bucking part (here's the 'I look stupid part') and I just went flying. The bad part was I landed on my back and hit the end of a log which shattered my shoulder blade (one of the hardest bones in the body) and two ribs below it. The good news is, it wasn't a few inches over on my spinal cord AND I had a good friend along with me.

"Two are better than one, because they had a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help." Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NRSV When I came to after hitting the log all I saw were white puffy clouds floating overhead. And then, the face of my dear friend Chris looking down at me. I don't remember for sure but I think he was laughing. But the important part was God had chosen to send a friend along with me that day. I needed him. There are times when we need a friend. Someone to lift us up, or listen to us, or just give us a hug. And there are times when God calls each one of us to be a friend to someone else. We need to be sensitive. Sometimes the pain that we need to treat in a friend is not as obvious as a shattered shoulder blade. Look around today into the eyes of your friends, and see who might need you to lift them up.

May the Lord who was lifted up for our sake, bless you with true (and strong) friends. Rudy

Our Bubbles We all have this zone of comfort where we are OK with the way things are; the people we meet and the way life happens. And most of us are not real good at moving outside that zone when confronted with situations or people that don't fit our neat little definition of how life ought to be. Some people even like watching us squirm a little when they throw out something just for the "shock value" of it. And, of course, depending on our zone or bubble, we either react the way they want us to, or maybe we are able to hide our reaction, but inside we are screaming, "What did he say?!" It is into these situations that we, as believers in Christ, are called to be. We are told that we need to be Light to a lost and dying generation. We are told that we need to be Hope for the hopeless. We are called outside of our comfort zones to share the Love of Christ to everyone that needs it.

Jesus, Himself, reached outside the comfort zone of the church of His day. "While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and 'sinners' came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners?'' On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'" Matthew 9:10-13 It is so easy for us to fall into the trap that caught the Pharisees. It is so easy for us to distance ourselves from the things that make us uncomfortable. But we must strive to follow the example that Jesus gave us. Even when it might threaten to pop our "bubble."

May the strength of Jesus go with you today, as you strive to bring hope to the hopeless! Rudy

Friendship with the WorldWhat I am going to say today, may at first reading seem like it contradicts all that I have been saying about friendship, but once you think about it, maybe you'll agree with me that it really doesn't. It has to do with the old saying, "Bad company corrupts good character." Even though I have said that you must love the unlovable, you must at the same time recognize the world and the evil that is in it. Many times we must love the people but not love what the people do. And if your faith isn't strong enough to not fall into the trap of their behavior, then you need to not be in the situation. We cannot be a friend of this world while we proclaim to be a friend of God. "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?" James 4:4 This seems to present us with a no win situation. But things are not as they seem. We have been given the whole armor of God with which to protect ourselves. "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist... In addition ... take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one." Ephesians 6:14ff As long as we don't leave our armor laying on the ground, but rather clothe ourselves with it, we can walk into the very camp of this world and proclaim the victory! Praise God for HIS strength! As you walk out into the world today, listen to Jesus when He tells us to "be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." Matthew 10:16
May Jesus Himself clothe you with His wisdom and strength!Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

And your drawings:

The Craving for Sin I really enjoy Doritos. They are one of my favorite chips. The other day I did a little digging for an electric line for our camp up in the mountains. It's about an hour's drive from my house and a fair distance from the closest 7 Eleven or Wendy's. The job took a little longer than I had first estimated and I ended up working through lunch. Since I hadn't brought lunch with me, as I started my drive back home I looked through my truck for something to eat. Most of you probably couldn't find something to eat in your truck, but you see, my truck is not just a normal truck. It has compartments! And just the previous weekend I had been in charge of food for the Jr. High Youth Ski Trip. So in one of my compartments I found a whole bag of Doritos Corn Chips. Not just a little bag, a full size bag! So I'm driving down the road munching on these chips and I realize in no time that I have consumed half the bag. So I roll up the bag and say to myself, that that is enough. I don't know what it is, maybe the flavor that's still in your mouth, but it is awfully hard to stop eating Doritos once you have started. It's kind of like just trying a little sin. Once you get the taste for it, it just keeps calling you back. In the case of the corn chips, I decided that I had to go "cold turkey." So I tossed the bag out of my reach into the back seat. I knew I couldn't just keep having one or two, because I just wouldn't stop. Is there something that you are currently involved in that you need to just stop "cold turkey?" If so, you can toss it to God. He will help you with it. He will put it in the back seat where we can't get to it. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

May the Lord who gives us our strength keep us from crawling after our sin! Rudy

Listen to the Praise"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world." Psalm 19:1-4 Sometimes I just stand there and drink in their song! Have you noticed lately how bright the morning star is? The whole of creation praises God with every second of time. All we have to do is listen anytime we need to be lifted up by the Glory and wonderful sound of praise to our Most Awesome Creator! We can even join right in with the song with our own praise to God and be in perfect harmony. Isn't it just wonderful to be alive?!

Thank you, Father God!, for your most awesome work at creation. Thank you, Jesus!, for being the bright Morning Star; our very salvation from the death of this world. Thank you, Holy Spirit; for being the testimony in our hearts, for filling us with the Goodness of You! Thank you my Awesome God for life, and especially new life in You. Thank you for the never-ending song of praise that rises to You on the breath of the dawn. And thank you for calling us to be part of that song! Amen and Amen!

May the God whose Praise never ends fill you with His Awesome Presence!Rudy

The Grocery Store of Life This little analogy is prompted by an email I received yesterday. But, more on that in a minute. Picture if you will, a grocery store. You are trying to get some things for a last minute dinner party and all of a sudden a very rambunctious 5 year old comes tearing around the corner. His hand is running along the shelves, knocking down all kinds of things off the shelves. Things like gallon jars of olive oil or packets of oatmeal cereal, both of which bust when they contact the floor. Then around the same corner comes the mother of this little terror. Only she is just shopping, oblivious to the carnage that her son has caused.

Now, bear with me for a moment; the grocery store represents your mind, with the five year old being your thought life. In essence, the email of yesterday questioned whether we had any hope of controlling our thought life. Indicating that maybe only when those thoughts became actions was there any real sin (or harm.) Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Matthew 5:27-28 This verse has always said to me that we are responsible for our thought life AND we need to try to keep it under control just like we strive to control our outward actions. And yes, of course, we all fail sometimes. Thanks be to the blood of Jesus that covers those failures! But we must strive to control the thoughts that roam the aisles of our minds or else the cleanup job is more than one person can manage.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus who gives us the victory! Rudy

Your Children (or your Grandchildren)
might be interested in your thoughts:

Multiple horizontal lines for writing.

And your drawings: